This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

B. 2. Bark.

Le Gendre Pierre Starkie.

ENGLISH
OXFORD
LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

30919

XL 17.1 [Ph

E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN
BEQUEST TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book
was acquired for the
MEYERSTEIN
COLLECTION
OF THE
ENGLISH FACULTY
LIBRARY
with the help
of a grant made under
this bequest

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

LORD BOLINGBROKE'S

Philosophical Works.

VOL. IV.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE

PHILOSOPHICAL

WORKS

Of the late Right Honorable

HENRY ST. JOHN,

LORD VISCOUNT BOLINGBROKE.

VOLUME IV.

LONDON:
Printed in the Year MDCCLXXVI.

ENGLISH
OXFORD
LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

FRAGMENTS OR MINUTES OF ESSAYS.

VI.

LET us take things then as we find them, more curious to know what is, than to imagine what may be. Let us turn our eyes on ourſelves, and conſider how we are made. We ſhall not find either the immediate or mediate illumination, that is ſuppoſed to come to us from without, and independently on which it is ſuppoſed that the human mind can exerciſe no act of intelligence: but we ſhall find that there is ſuch a thing as natural reaſon implanted in us by the author of our nature, whoſe progreſs and operations are known to us intuitively, and by the help of which we are able to acquire, not only moral, but every other human ſcience.

EXPERIENCE and obſervation require time; and reaſon, that collects from them, and is improved by them, comes ſlowly to our aſſiſtance. It would come too ſlowly, and want much of the power it has, weak and imperfect as that is, to regulate the conduct of human life, if the all-wiſe Creator had not implanted in us another principle, that of

Digitized by Google

ſelf-love, which is the original ſpring of human actions, under the direction of inſtinct firſt, and of reaſon afterwards. The firſt direction is common to all animals, even to thoſe that microſcopes alone can make viſible to the eye. The ſecond we ſay is peculiar to man; and ſo we may ſay properly enough, whether we conceive this faculty in man and beaſt to be wholly different in kind, or whether we conceive it to be vaſtly tranſcendent in man.

"Homo animans quidem eſt," Grotius ſpeaks*, "ſed eximium animans, multoque longius diſtans "a cæteris omnibus, quam cæterorum genera "inter ſe diſtant." I do not take this propoſition to be entirely true. It is impoſſible to obſerve the reſt of the animal kind, and not diſcern, in many of them, certain actions and rules of conduct that denote not only a more extenſive and ſurer inſtinct than we are conſcious of, but ſomething that appears rather a lower degree of reaſon, than a higher degree of inſtinct; if we are able by obſervation alone, and without any communication of their ideas, to diſtinguiſh ſo accurately. In all caſes, and in what manner ſoever it has been ordered by infinite wiſdom, there would be no difficulty in refuting, by particular facts, the general aſſertion of Grotius, nor in ſhewing that the difference in this reſpect, between ſome men and ſome other animals, is naturally leſs than that between different ſpecies of animals, and even

* De jure bel. et pac. Proleg.

between

Digitized by Google

between animals of one ſpecies, between man and man at leaſt. Superior beings, who look down on our intellectual ſyſtem, will not find, I perſuade myſelf, ſo great a diſtance between a gaſcon petit maitre and a monkey, or a german philoſopher and an elephant, whatever partiality we may have for our own ſpecies, as they will find between thoſe men who are born to inſtruct, and thoſe who are born incapable of inſtruction. GROTIUS might have allowed other animals much more intelligence than he did; though he allows them in a note, and on the authority of PHILO and others, a little more than in his text. What the authorities of antient authors ſignify in a matter ſo notorious, and ſo much within the obſervation of every age, I know not. But I know ſtill leſs what he means, when he ſays, "quod in illis quidem pro-"cedere credimus ex principio aliquo intelligente "extrinſeco, quia circa actus alios iſtis neutiquam "difficiliores par intelligentia in illis non apparet." If he had ſaid, from an inward principle, "ex "principio intrinſeco," as he has been made to ſay in ſome editions, he would have been intelligible, and would have meant very plainly a directing inſtinct, or a reaſoning faculty, much inferior to that of man, and variouſly implanted in the animal kind, to direct their actions to their different ends: but this would have been inconſiſtent with his argument, and he would have contradicted himſelf. He ſaid therefore "ex prin-"cipio extrinſeco:" and what could he mean by that? An outward force that impels or reſtrains

Digitized by Google

them, and directs their conduct occasionally, but not uniformly? This would be too absurd. Could he mean that immediate or mediate illumination from above, which the rabbins speak of, and suppose that animals receive from thence the intelligence they want, in certain cases, to fulfil the law of their nature; whilst they are left destitute of any intelligence, in others? This would be still more absurd. Might it not be deemed profane too among those, who fear to prostitute the divine action, as men who make hypotheses in theology and philosophy are apt to do?

The surest way of avoiding such absurdities is to be neither dogmatical, nor even over curious; and there is the less temptation to be either, on this subject, because the principles of the obligation of natural law, as far as we are concerned to know them, are extremely obvious. Instinct precedes reason in man. It supplies the want, or the imperfection of it in other animals. Should we venture to refine a little further on appearances, we might guess, that as the reason of man grows up out of habitual instinct, by experience and observation; so does that faculty, which I fear we must call by the same name in beasts. Some of these have instinct and reason far above others; and man has reason far above them all: because tho' they have senses more acute than men very often, and several, perhaps, of which we have no ideas; yet the very contrary is true as to mental faculties, which are plainly less imperfect, and more

Digitized by Google

more numerous in us than in them. They perceive ideas both ſimple and complex that come in by the ſenſes, and they retain them too, as we do. That they compare theſe ideas, in ſome degree, is certain. How far they compound them, by any intellectual operation, I much doubt. But this ſeems to be out of doubt, that they want totally the great inſtrument of human knowledge. I do not ſay abſtraction, which I take to be, as it is underſtood, a mere ens rationis, and to deny them which, is to deny them nothing; but I mean the wide extended power of generaliſing the ideas they have, without which there can be no ratiocination, nor knowledge ſufficient to conſtitute moral agents.

As divines have impudently, and wickedly, aſſumed (give me leave to uſe on this occaſion, which deſerves it if any can, the ſtyle they employ on every diſpute) that there is a law of right reaſon common to God and man; ſo lawyers have advanced, moſt abſurdly, that the law of nature is common to man and beaſt. "Jus naturale "eſt," ſay the compilers of the Digeſt, "quod "natura omnia animalia docuit. Nam jus iſtud "non humani generis proprium, ſed omnium "animalium," etc.

That the hiſtory and law of Moses is favorable to this opinion likewiſe, and that beaſts, as well as men, are repreſented and treated therein as accountable creatures, muſt not be denied, what-

Digitized by Google

ever ſhifts and evaſions commentators have invented. God is made to ſay, in the ix^th^ chapter of Geneſis, ſpeaking to NOAH and his children, "ſanguinem animarum veſtrarum requiram de "manu cunctarum beſtiarum, et de manu homi- "nis," etc. The text is plain. Shall it be evaded by ſaying, on ſome rabbinical authority, that the antediluvian tyrants kept wild beaſts to deſtroy men? and if they did ſo, who was to ſuffer, the tyrant or the beaſt? Not the beaſt certainly, unleſs they had both the ſame law: and yet the beaſt was accountable by it, as well as the tyrant. Thus again, in the xiii^th^ of Deuteronomy, God is made to ſay in the ſuppoſed caſe of idolatry. . . "percuties habitatores urbis illius in "ore gladii, et delebis eam ac omnia quæ in illa "ſunt, uſque ac pecora." Will it be ſufficient to ſay that this order was given to ſhew the heinouſneſs of a crime, by the puniſhment of creatures who neither were, nor could be guilty of it? Among the judgments denounced, in Leviticus, againſt thoſe who ſhould copulate with beaſts, the puniſhment is to be inflicted on the beaſt as well as on the man or woman. "Qui cum jumento "et pecore coierit morte moriatur: pecus quoque "occidite. Mulier quæ ſuccubuerit cuilibet ju- "mento ſimul interficietur cum eo: ſanguis "eorum ſit ſuper eos." The Jews are ſaid to have diſpenſed with this puniſhment, when the boy was under nine, and the girl under three years of age: becauſe they did not ſuppoſe children ſo young to be capable of ſuch pollution. But was the

Digitized by Google

the beaſt that copulated with a man or a woman, at any age, capable of knowing the crime? Mr. SELDEN brings a paſſage or two out of the Miſna, to ſhew that the beaſt was not put to death for ſinning againſt any laws but in order to blot out the memory of ſo great a ſcandal. He adds, that the death of the beaſt was deemed a puniſhment on the owner, who ſhould have kept him with greater care; and from hence he concludes "adeo "ut poenam ob jus aliquod violatum ad beſtiam "attinere neutiquam ullatenus admittant, nec "jure aliquo eam teneri." But it will not be hard to prove, from what Mr. SELDEN * himſelf admits in this very chapter, that the Jews made beaſts accountable, like moral agents, whatever their rabbins might pretend to mitigate the abſurdity. The Sadducees brought ſome ſuch accuſation againſt them. MAIMONIDES anſwers it by denying that the beaſt, who had killed a man, was put to death, "ad poenam ab illa exigen-"dam." He was put to death, "ad poenam "exigendam a domino;" for it was not lawful to eat the goaring ox, after he had been ſtoned. But if this was ſo, how came the ox to eſcape when he had killed a Gentile, and to be ſtoned irremiſſibly when he had killed a Jew? How came the ſame rule to be obſerved in the caſe of beaſtiality? In ſhort is it not plain, and would it not be allowed to be ſo, in the caſe of any other nation, that the Jews imagined the law of nature to be common

* Lib. i. c. 4.

Digitized by Google

to man and beaſt; that they underſtood and executed their own law accordingly; and that, notwithſtanding the diſtinction made between the law of the Gentiles and the law of the Jews with reſpect to the puniſhment, they muſt have proceeded in the caſes here mentioned without any principle at all, or on this principle, that beaſts are by nature accountable for crimes, and even able to diſcern between the greater crime and the leſs? I know nothing more abſurd than this, except a cuſtom or law at Athens, that was however leſs cruel. The weapons by which a murther had been committed were brought into court, as if they too were liable to puniſhment; and the ſtatue that had killed a man by it's fall was, by a ſolemn ſentence of that wiſe people the Thaſii, founded on a law DRACO, caſt into the ſea.

THE principle of this juriſprudence cannot be reconciled to right reaſon. But the definition of the Roman lawyers may be ſhewn to be rather too ſhort, than falſe. As far as an inſtinct, common to all animals, directs the conduct of men, this inſtinct may be called the law of nature, and this law may be called the law of the whole kind. But in the human ſpecies, where inſtinct ceaſes, reaſon is given to direct; a ſecond table is added to the firſt, and both together compoſe the law of nature relatively to man. Inſtinct and reaſon may be conceived as different promulgations of the ſame law; one made of a part only by nature herſelf, immediately and univerſally; the other marked out

Digitized by Google

out by her in the whole extent of the law, and to be collected from these marks or notices by reason, which is right or wrong as it promulgates agreebly to them or not.

THERE is a sort of genealogy of law, in which nature begets natural law, natural law sociability, sociability union of societies by consent, and this union by consent the obligation of civil laws. When I make sociability the daughter of natural law, and the grandaughter of nature, I mean plainly this. Self-love, the original spring of human actions, directs us necessarily to sociability. The same determination of nature appears in other animals. They all herd with those of their own species, with whom they sympathise more; whose language, perhaps, whether it consists in signs or sounds, they understand better; and from whom, if individuals do not receive much good, they may have less evil to apprehend. This instinct operates, at least, as strongly in man. I shall not contradict what TULLY says in his offices *, that if we were not sociable "propter necessitatem "vitae," on account of our mutual wants, if they were all supplied by providence and without any human help, "quasi virgula divina," yet still we should fly absolute solitude, and seek human conversation. I believe we should. But even in this imaginary case, self-love would be the determining principle still. That friendships may be

* Lib. i. 44.

formed,

Digitized by Google

formed, and maintained, without any conſideration of utility, I agree, and hope I have proved. There is a ſort of intellectual ſympathy, better felt than expreſſed, in characters, by which particular men are ſometimes united ſooner, and more intimately, than they could be by mere eſteem, by expectation of good offices, or even by gratitude. I know not, to ſay it by the way, whether there is not a ſort of corporal ſympathy too, without the ſuppoſition of which it is impoſſible to account for the ſtrong attachments which ſome men have had for the leaſt tempting, and in all reſpects the leaſt deſerving women, and ſome women for the leaſt tempting and leaſt deſerving men.

But this is not the caſe of general ſociability. To account for that we have no need to recur to occult qualities. Inſtinct leads us to it, by a ſenſe of pleaſure: and reaſon, that, recalling the paſt, foreſees the future, confirms us in it by a ſenſe of happineſs. Inſtinct is an inferior principle, and ſufficient for the inferior ends to which other animals are directed. Reaſon is a ſuperior principle, and ſufficient for the ſuperior ends to which mankind is directed. The neceſſities, the conveniencies of life, and every agreeable ſenſation, are the objects of both. But happineſs is a continued enjoyment of theſe, and that is an object proportioned to reaſon alone. Neither is obtained out of ſociety; and ſociability therefore is the foundation of human happineſs. Society cannot be maintained without

Digitized by Google

without benevolence, juſtice, and the other moral virtues. Theſe virtues, therefore, are the foundations of ſociety: and thus men are led, by a chain of neceſſary conſequences, from the inſtinctive to the rational law of nature, if I may ſpeak ſo. Self-love operates in all theſe ſtages. We love ourſelves, we love our families, we love the particular ſocieties to which we belong, and our benevolence extends at laſt to the whole race of mankind. Like ſo many different vortices, the center of them all is ſelf-love, and that which is the moſt diſtant from it is the weakeſt.

THIS will appear to be in fact the true conſtitution of human nature. It is the intelligible plan of divine wiſdom. Man is able to underſtand it, and may be induced to follow it by the double motive of intereſt and duty. As to the firſt, real utility and right reaſon coincide. As to the laſt, ſince the author of our nature has determined us irreſiſtibly to deſire our own happineſs, and ſince he has conſtituted us ſo, that private good depends on the public, and the happineſs of every individual on the happineſs of ſociety, the practice of all the ſocial virtues is the law of our nature, and made ſuch by the will of God, who, having determined the end and proportioned the means, has willed that we ſhould purſue one by the other. To think thus, is to think reaſonably of man and of the law of his nature, as well as humbly and reverently of the Supreme Being. But to talk, like CUMBERLAND, of promoting the good

Digitized by Google

good of the whole ſyſtem of rational agents, among whom God is included, and of human benevolence towards him, is to talk metaphyſical jargon and theological blaſphemy. He confeſſes that he uſes theſe expreſſions in an improper ſenſe, and explains, moſt unintelligibly to any man who has right conceptions of the majeſty of the all-perfect Being, what he means. His meaning, which he takes from TULLY, and which TULLY took from the Stoicians, is expreſſed by the roman philoſopher in the firſt book of his Laws. He ſays there, that "nothings is more divine than reaſon; that "reaſon grown up to maturity and perfection is "called wiſdom; that nothing being better than "this reaſon, which is in man as well as in God, "the firſt ſociety that man has is in this commu-"nity of reaſon with God; that from this com-"munity of reaſon there ariſes a community of "law, ſo that the whole world is to be deemed "one city or ſtate, compoſed of gods and men."* Much might be ſaid to ſhew the abſurdity and impertinence of ſuch doctrines as theſe, and ſome reflections to this purpoſe have been made occaſionally. But I content myſelf to obſerve here, how unneceſſary theſe doctrines are to explain what the laws of nature are, and what the authority is by which they are made laws, even in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word. We ſay, that the law of nature is the law of reaſon: and ſo it is in this ſenſe,

* Quum adolevit atque perfecta eſt.—Eaque et in homine et in Deo—Una civitas communis deorum atque hominum exiſtimandus. CIC. De legib.

and

Digitized by Google

and thus far. A right uſe of this faculty, which God has given us, collects this law from the nature of things, as they ſtand in the ſyſtem which he has conſtituted. Reaſon can look no higher, nor will right reaſon attempt it; for ſurely no diſquiſition can be more vain and needleſs than that which examines whether actions are lawful or unlawful, "debiti aut illiciti," becauſe they are commanded or forbid by God; or whether they are ſuch "per ſe," independently on God, and therefore neceſſarily, "neceſſario," commanded or forbidden by him. GROTIUS * adopts the laſt of theſe notions: and the general current of metaphyſical refinement runs that way. It aſſumes in man a community of reaſon with God, and then it ſeems conſequential to aſſume, that men, ſuch men at leaſt as theſe reaſoners imagine themſelves to be, are able to diſcern natures and to judge of things antecedently to actual exiſtence, and abſtractedly from it; whereas, perhaps, to think rightly, we muſt think that theſe natures and things, conſidered abſtractedly from the manner and the relations in which they exiſt, are nothing better than imaginary entities, objects of ill-choſen ſpeculation, not of knowledge. He who thinks thus will be apt to aſk, what would become of juſtice if we ſuppoſed a ſyſtem wherein there was no property; or what of temperance, if we ſuppoſed one wherein there could be no exceſs? Such queſtions, and many other objections, would not be eaſily anſwered: and the ſole

* GROT. De jure bel. et pac. Lib. i. c. 1.

effect

Digitized by Google

effect of this hypotheſis muſt be, as I think it has been, to render our notions of natural laws diſputable and indeterminable in many caſes. This diſquiſition is therefore not only vain but hurtful. It is needleſs too, abſolutely needleſs; for will any man deny, that however indifferent actions may be per ſe, and ſimply conſidered, they ceaſe to be ſo when they are connected with a ſyſtem, and cannot be ſeparated, not even in imagination, from the relations they bear to other parts of the ſyſtem, nor from their effects on the whole? The ſyſtem to which we belong, like every other ſyſtem, was made by the will of God, and therefore all the natures contained in it, both phyſical and moral, were ordained by the ſame will. It has been ſaid with ſhocking impiety, by ſchoolmen and others, that if things were made as they are by the mere will of God, and not according to the eſſential differences and eternal independent natures of things, God might have made our obligations by the law of nature to be contrary to what they are. He might have made it our duty to blaſpheme not to adore him, and to exerciſe injuſtice not juſtice in our dealings with other men. But this is one inſtance, and not the leaſt, of that habitual preſumption which men contract in the ſchools of metaphyſics and theology, where they are accuſtomed to reaſon about what infinite wiſdom and power might, or ſhould have done, inſtead of contending themſelves to know what they have done, and pronouncing it, for that reaſon, fitteſt to be done. In creating man, God deſigned

to

Digitized by Google

to create not only a rational, but a ſocial creature, and a moral agent; and he has framed his nature accordingly. If he had deſigned this world to be the habitation of devils, he might have made us by nature what we ſay that they have made themſelves by rebellion. But, as we ought not to preſume to meaſure the divine perfections, nor the proceedings of infinite wiſdom, by our ſcanty and precarious ideas, ſo it is worſe than preſumption to aſcribe, even hypothetically, to the all-perfect Being any thing that is evidently repugnant to our ideas of perfection. Once more, therefore, let us be content to know things as God has been pleaſed to ſhew them to us, and to look no further than our nature for the law of it. In that, we ſhall find this law co-eval with our ſyſtem, if not with the author, and as immutable as the ſyſtem, if not as immutable as God.

THEY who affect to carry their ſearch further, fall into different abſurdities. Some are intent on ſuch abſtractions, as have been mentioned, abſtractions of eternal eſſences, intelligible independent natures, by which both natural and moral differences were conſtituted before there was any natural or moral law, any natural or moral agents. Whilſt theſe men pretend to conſult the dictates of right reaſon, they leave reaſon no rule to go by. Every man aſſumes that his own is right: and ethics become as intricate, as uncertain, and as contentious a ſcience, as theology. Whilſt theſe men miſapply and abuſe their reaſon, there are thoſe who ſeem to have no want of it in order to diſcover

Digitized by Google

diſcover the law of nature. They affirm that they have (and the ſole proof in this caſe, as in the caſe of abſtraction, is affirmation) a moral ſenſe, that is, an inſtinct by which they diſtinguiſh what is morally good from what is morally evil, and perceive an agreeable or diſagreeable intellectual ſenſation accordingly, without the trouble of obſervation and reflection. They bid fair to be enthuſiaſts in ethics, and to make natural religion as ridiculous, as ſome of their brothers have made revealed religion by inſiſting on the doctrine of an inward light.

THE laſt of theſe wild men, that I ſhall mention, are ſuch as ANAXARCHUS, and our HOBBES. If the former had been guilty of nothing worſe than that which GROTIUS lays to his charge, he would have been leſs liable to cenſure than GROTIUS himſelf. This great lawyer and divine diſtinguiſhes between the law of nature, and the poſitive law of God, or man. By the laſt, he underſtands a law of will *. By the firſt, a dictate of right reaſon †, that ſhews the moral turpitude ‡, or the moral neceſſity there is in every action, that is, a ſuppoſed morality, or immorality, independent on any poſitive law. Thus he diſtinguiſhes, and therefore blames ANAXARCHUS for ſpeaking too indiſtinctly ‖ of law. But this diſtinction muſt not paſs for true. The law of

* Jus voluntarium. † Dictatum rectae rationis.
‡ Moralem turpitudinem, aut neceſſitatem moralem.
‖ Nimium indiſtincte.

nature,

Digitized by Google

nature, which he allows divine in one ſenſe, is in every ſenſe as much, as any other, a poſitive law of God, enacted as truly by the divine will, and promulgated by the divine authority not only as truly, but more evidently and more univerſally, as well as immutably. The fault of ANAXARCHUS lay here, that to flatter ALEXANDER when he had killed CLITUS ‡, he attributed to this prince the power that the poets attributed to JUPITER, the power to make particular and even occaſional rules of right and wrong by will. The fault of HOBBES lay here, he put the Supreme Being out of the caſe entirely, aſcribed no legiſlative authority or no exerciſe of it to him, aſſumed all actions to have been indifferent not only before our ſyſtem was created, but even after it was ſo, and till the civil magiſtrate had made a difference between them by commanding ſome, and by forbidding others.

MANY ſuch general and fundamental abſurdities as theſe are to be found in the writings even of thoſe who have writ with the moſt applauſe on this ſubject; beſides a multitude of particular queſtions, as frivolous as any that the ſchoolmen ever broached. I paſs them all by with the neglect that they deſerve, except one; ſome further notice of which is neceſſary to connect with what has been ſaid, and to carry on my train of thoughts.

‡ PLUT. in ALEXAN.

Digitized by Google

VII.

THE preſumption of thoſe, who pretend to deduce our moral obligation from the moral attributes of God, has ſo much theological authority on its ſide, that the abſurdity of it cannot be too often expoſed and cenſured. There is fraud too, which I did not obſerve before, in this pretenſion; and fraud ſo manifeſt, that we may ſometimes ſuſpect it to be wilful. Inſtead of tranſferring from God to man, to uſe a phraſe of CICERO, they tranſfer from man to God; and whilſt they boaſt that man is made after the image of God, they make God after the image of man. What they preſent to us for a copy, is the original; and what they preſent for the original, is in reality the copy. Tho' we riſe from the knowledge of ourſelves, and of the other works of God, to a knowledge of his exiſtence and his wiſdom and power, which we call infinite, becauſe the ſenſible effects of them go far beyond our utmoſt conceptions of wiſdom and power, yet we cannot riſe thus to a knowledge of his manner of being, nor of his manner of producing thoſe effects which give us ideas of wiſdom and power; and as little, or leſs if poſſible, can we riſe from our moral obligations to his ſuppoſed moral attributes. I call them ſuppoſed, becauſe, after all that has been ſaid to prove a neceſſary connection between his phyſical and his moral attributes, the latter may be all abſorbed in his wiſdom. It is even more agree-

able

able to the phænomena to believe that they are ſo, and that, his wiſdom determining him to do always that which is fitteſt to be done upon the whole, of which fitneſs we are in no degree competent judges, the effects of it give us ſometimes ideas of thoſe moral qualities, which we acquire by reflection on ourſelves or by our dealings with one another, and ſometimes not. The works of God would give us ideas of wiſdom and power, if human actions and operations gave us none; and, in fact, the example of ſavage nations will ſhew, I think, that the firſt and ſtrongeſt impreſſions of this kind come from thence. But it is evident that the firſt and ſtrongeſt impreſſions, that we receive of benevolence, juſtice, and other moral virtues, come from reflection on ourſelves, and from our dealings with one another, from what we feel in ourſelves, and from what we obſerve in other men. Theſe we acknowledge to be, however limited and imperfect, the excellencies of our own nature, and therefore conceiving them without any limitations or imperfections, we aſcribe them to the divine. We do worſe: we aſcribe our affections and paſſions to the divine nature. We make God ſo much a copy of man, that we deſign the worſt, as well as the beſt, of our own features, if I may ſay ſo, in our repreſentations of him: and, as common as it is, no unprejudiced thinking man can hear, without aſtoniſhment, our perfections and our imperfections imputed to the Supreme Being, in the ſame breath, and by the ſame men; with this difference, as

Digitized by Google

moſt, that the former are imputed directly, and the latter ſometimes under the thin and trite veil of analogy. In a being thus conſtituted they may well imagine that the moral virtues are the ſame as they are in our ideas: and theology may eaſily deduce from his attributes the characters theology has given them. But a being thus conſtituted is not the ſupreme, the all-perfect Being: and a very ſhort analyſe of the excellencies of our own nature will be ſufficient to ſhew that they cannot be applied from man to God without profaneneſs, nor from God to man without the moſt ſhameful abſurdity. Let me allude, on this occaſion, to a paſſage I have ſeen quoted from the Ethics of ARISTOTLE. To what actions of the divinity can we apply, or from what can we deduce our notions of human juſtice? Both might be done, perhaps, by thoſe who aſſumed, like TULLY, community of gods and men, or by thoſe who drew the divinity down to human converſations and human cares, to be immediately and, as we may ſay, perſonally an actor in human affairs, to be a contracting party in covenants and alliances with men. Nay, ſomething of the ſame kind may be done by thoſe who acknowledge the infinite wiſdom of God, and yet include him in this ſyſtem of rational agents, every one of which is obliged to promote the good of the whole; who acknowledge the infinite diſtance between God and man, and yet aſſert that they may be compared together on account of their rationality, and be ſaid, not figuratively but literally,

Digitized by Google

literally, to be of the ſame mind. But how ſhall we deduce fortitude from the attributes of God, or aſcribe this virtue to him who can endure no pain, nor be expoſed to any danger? How temperance, when it would be the moſt horrid blaſphemy to ſuppoſe him ſubject to any human appetites and paſſions, and much more to ſome ſo inordinate as to require a particular virtue to reſtrain and govern them? I might bring many more inſtances of the ſame kind. But theſe are enough: and he, who will not be convinced by theſe, how abſurdly the laws of nature are founded, by ſome writers, in the moral attributes of God, will be convinced by none.

But now, as abſurd as theſe doctrines are, we muſt not imagine that the law of nature wants any proofs of a divine ſanction, or a divine original. They are both contained in one: and the puniſhment, which attends the breach of this law, reſults as neceſſarily, as the law itſelf, from that nature which God has been pleaſed to conſtitute according to his good pleaſure. Let it not be ſaid that this puniſhment is only temporal, and the ſanction therefore inſufficient. Let not this be ſaid, particularly by thoſe men, who talk ſo much of a poſitive law given by God to his choſen people, the ſanction of which was no other than temporal pains and penalties. Let it not be objected further, that the penalties, which make the ſanction of natural law, affect nations collectively, and not men individually; for which reaſon, they

Digitized by Google

are leſs proper to enforce the obſervation of the law. The penalties annexed to the breach of the law of MOSES were of the ſame kind, in general, oppreſſion, famine, peſtilence, wars, and captivities: and when particular puniſhments were inflicted by virtue of this law, it did no more, than what is done every day and in all countries, with leſs tumult and with better order, in conſequence of the law of nature, and for the preſervation of ſociety. Once more, let it not be objected, as it has been, that this law is not univerſally known. It is univerſally given, and if it is not known, and practiſed alike by all mankind, many of the firſt great principles of it are ſo in every human ſociety, even in thoſe of the leaſt civiliſed people; whilſt the far greateſt part of the world are invincibly ignorant of the firſt principles of chriſtianity, without the knowledge of which, and without faith in which, they are all condemned to eternal puniſhment.

INSTEAD of making objections ſo inſufficient as theſe, and ſo liable to be retorted, let the ſame men confeſs that the divine inſtitution of the law of nature reſts on fuller and more convincing proofs, both external and internal, than any that have been found, or could be given, of the divine inſtitution of chriſtianity. The latter has all thoſe which the manner in which it was revealed, and the nature of it, allowed it to have. But the manner in which the former has been revealed to mankind, as well as the matter of it, admitted of proofs

Digitized by Google

proofs of both kinds, much more evident, and much more proportioned to the human underſtanding. The good news of chriſtianity was publiſhed by CHRIST and his apoſtles; it was confirmed by miracles, and the proof was no doubt ſufficient for the converſion of all thoſe who heard the publication of this doctrine, and ſaw the confirmation of it. One can only wonder that any ſuch remained unconvinced. But this proof became, in a very little time, traditional and hiſtorical; and one might be allowed to wonder how the effect of it continued, and increaſed too, as the force of it diminiſhed, if the reaſons of this phaenomenon were not obvious in hiſtory. Nay, tho' they are ſo, one may ſtill wonder why they, who propagate chriſtianity, have not met oftener with the anſwer which ETHELRED, the Saxon king, made to AUGUSTINE, "I cannot "abandon the religion of my fathers for one "that you would perſuade me to receive on the "authority of perſons quite unknown to me." He came however afterwards to a better ſenſe, either by the ſupernatural effects of grace, or by the natural effects of the cajolement or importunity, perhaps, of BERTHE. The revelation of the law of nature is of another kind. Whether the word of God is his word, may be, and we ſee has been, diſputed by theiſts. But whether his works are his works, neither has been, nor can be, diſputed by any ſuch. Natural religion therefore being founded on human nature, the work of God, and on the neceſſary conditions of human

Digitized by Google

happineſs which are impoſed by the whole ſyſtem of it, every man who receives the law of nature receives it on his own authority, and not on the authority of other men known or unknown, and in their natural ſtate as fallible as himſelf. The revelation is not communicated to him only by tradition and hiſtory: it is a perpetual, a ſtanding revelation, always made, always making, and as preſent in theſe days, as in the days of ADAM, to all his offspring. The external proofs then, for theſe are properly ſuch, of the divine inſtitution of the law of nature, are concluſive to every theiſt. Let us examine the internal, and compare them with the proofs that are contained in, or deduced from, the ſcriptures, to ſhew their divine original.

VIII.

NOW the unwritten law of God, unwritten even in the hearts of men, how early ſoever inſtinct diſpoſes them to receive it, is an object of knowledge, not of belief. We know that God exiſts, with a certainty little inferior to that which we have of our own exiſtence. We know that he has given us a law of our nature, with as great a certainty as inward conſciouſneſs and outward obſervation can give us: and by theſe means, by which we acquire all other ſcience, it is in the power of every rational creature to acquire as much of this ſcience as the ends of his being make it neceſſary that he ſhould. Natural law is found-

ed

Digitized by Google

ed in reason, which every creature, that has it, may exercise; and the creature, that has it not, is not subject to the law. Christianity is founded in faith; and faith proceeds from grace. He, who has not faith, cannot fulfil a law that consists, at least, as much in believing as in practising: and whether he shall have grace, or no, does not depend on him. Thus the difference between the internal proofs of the two laws stands in one respect. The contents of the law of nature are objects of such a certainty as the author of nature alone can communicate. The contents of the whole christian system, laid down in our scriptures, are objects of such a probability as may force assent very reasonably, in this case, without doubt; although a concurrence of various circumstances, improved by the credulity of some men and the artifice of others, has forced this assent in cases not very dissimilar, and wherein it would have been more reasonably withheld. The difference here stated, between the manifestations of the will of God to man in the law of nature, and in every other law, is so true, that every other law is controlled by it, and could not pass for the law of God if it was seen to be repugnant to the former. To say nothing of the law given to ADAM, nor of that given to NOAH, according to the Jews, all orthodox writers think themselves obliged to hold, for the honour of the mosaical law, not only that there is nothing contrary to the natural law enjoined by it, "id quod ea lege praecipitur "non esse contra jus naturae," as GROTIUS says,

ſays *, but alſo that all the obligations of the natural law are contained in it, "contineri quidem "in ſacro illo corpore ſeu pentateucho," as Mr. SELDEN ſays; though he owns at the ſame time, that much chemical ſkill is neceſſary to extract them from it. That the chriſtian law is nothing elſe than the law of nature, enforced by a new revelation, every friend to chriſtianity admits, and the worſt of its enemies dares not deny, though he denies the reality of the revelation.

ANOTHER internal proof of the divine original of the law of nature is the plainneſs and ſimplicity, which renders it intelligible in all times and all places alike, and proportions it to the meaneſt underſtanding. It has been made intricate by caſuiſtry, that of lawyers and that of divines, as chriſtian religion has been by theology. But there is a conſiderable difference between the two caſes. The firſt principles of natural religion are ſo ſimple and plain, that caſuiſtry has no apparent pretence to meddle with them, no more than it would have if it pretended to teach us to ſee things that lie obvious before us, at a juſt diſtance, and exactly proportioned to our ſight. Theſe principles want neither paraphraſe nor commentary, to be ſufficiently underſtood; whereas the very firſt principles of chriſtian religion, concerning the fall and redemption of man, are ſo veiled in myſtery of language, that without a comment, or with one, and even with that of St. PAUL, they give us

* Lib. i. c. 1. De jure bel. et pac.

no

Digitized by Google

no clear and distinct ideas, nor any thing more than forms of speech and words to pronounce. They who under this pretence, such as it is, introduce reason where reason has nothing to do, explain what revelation has left unexplained, and define articles of faith which are either defined in the word of God, or which no mortal has any right to define, introduce afterwards their theology, under the name of moral theology, where that has nothing to do, and corrupt the unwritten law of God even with less pretence than they corrupted the written. I charge this double corruption upon them the more boldly, because every one, who is in the least conversant in their writings, is able to bring numerous instances of both, and to shew, that I may keep to my present subject, how they have established doctrines, and decided cases of conscience, in direct opposition to the most known and the most sacred duties of natural religion, till they have rendered men infinitely worse than they would have been in Hobbes's state of nature, without any religion or law whatever. Two things alone have checked this torrent of iniquity, to some degree. The first has been the interposition of the civil power. The second has been the insuperable difficulty of determining men, generally and constantly, and out of some peculiar circumstances, to violate the laws of their nature, as individuals, or as members of society, by precept, by example, or by any authority whatever. The light of nature, like that of the sun, may be eclipsed: it cannot be extinguished.

Digitized by Google

Notwithstanding all the abuſes of private and public morality, therefore, that the paſſions of ſome men may commit occaſionally, and that the particular intereſt of others may invite them to propagate, even under the maſk of religion, theſe two internal probfs of the divine inſtitution of the law of nature, the conſcious certainty that we have, and the plainneſs and ſimplicity of it, are in their full force, and ſuperior to thoſe of the ſame kind which any other revelation contains. It may ſeem ſtrange to many that the plainneſs and ſimplicity of the law of nature ſhould be brought as a proof of it's divinity. They have been accuſtomed to think that types, ſymbols, figures, dark enigmatical expreſſions, and every thing that has the appearance of myſtery, are eſſential marks of a divine revelation. Such might a revelation made to ſuperior Beings appear to us; and ſuch would a revelation made to us concerning the divine nature, and the ſecret economy of the divine providence, not only appear to be, but really be, myſterious and unintelligible, and therefore no revelation at all. For this very reaſon, it is agreeable to all our ideas of wiſdom to believe that no ſuch revelation was intended to be made to us. Such means could not be proportionable to any end. The all-wiſe Creator could not mean to inform his creatures unintelligibly, or to leave an explanation of his nature, and of the whole economy of his providence, to be made by men who undertake both preſumptuouſly, and who diſhonor

Digitized by Google

nor both, as far as man may be ſaid to honor or diſhonor God, by all the ſilly paradoxes they advance dogmatically, and without having, for the moſt part, any juſt notions even of the wiſdom and dignity of human conduct in ſuperior forms of life. Such myſterious means then could not have been effectual, unleſs our improvement in metaphyſical knowledge had been the end of divine wiſdom, which it would be impertinent to ſuppoſe: and if the end of this wiſdom was to inform us of the divine will, to ſhew us the perfection of our nature, and to teach us to tend towards it in the purſuit of happineſs, ſuch means are quite unneceſſary. They are, therefore, proportioned to no end. They are, therefore, unworthy of God.

CLEARNESS, preciſion, and a true conformity to the nature of things are the perfections of human, and much more of divine laws. Though the nature of the univerſe, and the rules by which God proceeds in the government of every ſyſtem contained in it, of ours among the reſt, are unknown to us, yet is the nature of our own ſyſtem, as far as the morality of actions is concerned, ſufficiently known to us, and the laws of our nature conſequently, ſince they reſult from it. Here then is all the clearneſs, all the preciſion, and all the conformity to the nature of things, that God can give, or man deſire. From hence we may, and we ought, to form our judgment of all laws that are aſſumed to be divine. They muſt not be incom-

Digitized by Google

incomprehenſible; becauſe, though they proceed from the divine intelligence, they are adapted to the human. God does not ſhew his own nature in them. He ſhews us our nature, and our duty; by the firſt of which we ſtand in the loweſt relation of intellectual creatures to their Creator, and by the laſt in that of ſubjects and ſervants to a gracious and beneficent lord and maſter, who gives us laws neither ambiguous nor captious, and who commands us nothing which it is not our intereſt to perform.

ANOTHER internal proof of the divinity of natural law muſt not be paſſed over without mention. As all is ſimple and plain, nothing is mean nor trifling in it. This religion ſhews us a Supreme Being, veiled in the majeſty of his nature, but manifeſted in all his works to be the true and only true object of our adoration. In the exiſtence he has given us, and in the benefits that attach us ſo ſtrongly to it, this religion ſhews him to be the firſt and greateſt object of our gratitude; in the eſtabliſhed order of things, ſubject to ſo many viciſſitudes and yet ſo conſtant, to be the reaſonable, as well as neceſſary object of our reſignation; and finally in the wants, diſtreſſes, and dangers, which theſe viciſſitudes bring frequently upon us, to be the comfortable object of our hope: in which hope, the religion of nature will teach us, no doubt, to addreſs ourſelves to the Almighty, in a manner conſiſtent with an entire reſignation to his will, as ſome of the heathen did. But this religion

Digitized by Google

religion will not teach us to pray, as if we informed omniſcience, or expoſtulated with omnipotence, as thoſe who pretend to be the moſt reformed among chriſtians are accuſtomed to do; nor to make religion a ſervice of ſhew and outward geſture, as your pretended catholic church has done. The religion of nature teaches to worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth, that is inwardly and ſincerely. It neither confounds ſpiritual pride and enthuſiaſm, nor theatrical pomp and ſuperſtitious rites, with devotion. Fraud, envy, malice, ſilent and ſecret vices, more dangerous often to ſociety than thoſe of greater eclat, have lurked behind the former. The latter, though they affect the ſenſes without touching the heart, have paſſed in general, and ſtill paſs, for divine worſhip. God has been ſerved in a manner, which the moſt ſanguinary tyrant would abhor, by ſome people: by others, with all the circumſtances of that low adulation which earthly monarchs require, and whereof the prieſts themſelves have claimed a ſhare. That there is a middle proceeding, fit to be obſerved, between a theatrical worſhip and a worſhip ſtripped of all outward ſolemnity and pomp, I am ready to admit. In this, and in a multitude of caſes, the law of nature or right reaſon may approve ſuch laws and inſtitutions as nature or reaſon has not preſcribed; becauſe they may be proper, and even neceſſary means to promote the obſervation of this law. But then they ought to paſs for forms directed to this purpoſe, for human not for divine ordinances. Let the prieſt wear a ridiculous cap and breaſt-plate,

Digitized by Google

plate, or fringes and bells on his robe; but let it not be ſaid that the Supreme Being took care of his attire, or that ſuch trifles as theſe were the inſtitutions of divine wiſdom.

THERE is nothing in the law of nature unworthy the author of it; and much leſs can it, or does it, contain any thing inconſiſtent with itſelf. The rules by which God governs even the ſyſtem to which we belong are unknown to us; but this we know moſt certainly, that he cannot command in particular, what he forbids in general. He who has made benevolence to all rational beings the fundamental law of our nature, can never command ſome to rob, or to murder others; to uſurp on the rights of their fellow-creatures, and to exterminate whole nations. In ſhort, the internal proofs of the divinity of the law of nature, both poſitive and negative, are ſuch as render this law the true criterion of every law and religion that pretend to the ſame original. It may be diſputed, perhaps, whether our abſtract notions of the moral fitneſs and unfitneſs of things afford a ſufficient rule, whereby to judge of the truth of any religion that is ſaid to come from God. But there is no room to diſpute, whether the conformity or non-conformity of ſuch a religion to that law which God has given to all human creatures, enacted in the conſtitution of their nature, and diſcernible by the uſe of thoſe faculties he has given them likewiſe, is a rule ſufficient for this purpoſe. Was it otherwiſe, we ſhould have no ſufficient rule at all.

Men

Digitized by Google

Men might dispute eternally about the dictates of right reason, and the will of God would be entirely out of the question; or it would be made determinable by an indeterminable question, what those eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses of things are, according to which, and in a dependency on which, the will of God must proceed, and be signified to his creatures. That this would be so, is evident in the different opinions that have been entertained, ever since theology was made a science, concerning the existence of evil as well as good, and concerning the distribution of them. But if we confine ourselves to the revelation God has made of his will in his works, and to the knowledge we have that his will is necessarily determined by his wisdom, we shall have a certain and sufficient rule by which to judge of his laws. What is the will of God, is a question easily answered. What ought this will to be, is a question we cannot presume to answer without absurdity and impiety both. To answer the first, we need to go no higher than the moral obligations that arise in our own system, and of which we have very adequate ideas. To answer the last, we must go up to the nature of the author of nature, and to a multitude of other natures, the assuming of which put the Supreme Being just in the case of his creature man. The nature of the human system is independent on man; and yet he is obliged to derive the rules of his conduct from it. Just so, upon this assumption, the abstract natures and eternal essences of things are independent on God; and yet God was obliged

Digitized by Google

to make, and is obliged to govern his ſyſtem according to them.

By employing our reaſon to collect the will of God from the fund of our nature, phyſical and moral, and by comtemplating ſeriouſly and frequently the laws that are plainly, and even neceſſarily, deducibly from thence, we may acquire not only a particular knowledge of theſe laws, but a general, and in ſome ſort an habitual, knowledge of the manner in which God is pleaſed to exerciſe his ſupreme power in this ſyſtem, beyond which we have no concern. We do not ſee the divine painter, if I may employ ſo low a compariſon on ſo high a ſubject; but we grow accuſtomed to his manner, and we learn to deſpiſe thoſe who preſent us a ſign-poſt dawbing, and call it impudently the work of RAPHAEL.

IX.

AS certain, as plain, as important, and as conſiſtent as the law of nature is, it has been blended with many abſurd and contradictory laws, in all ages and countries, by legiſlators who publiſhed them, ſometimes in their own name, and ſometimes in the name of God; as well as with cuſtoms of the ſame kinds, which, if they aroſe independent on laws, obtained the force of laws. EUSEBIUS, in the firſt book of his Evangelical preparation, gives a long catalogue of them; and he gives it for a very good purpoſe, to ſhew in ſeveral inſtances how ſuch laws and cuſtoms as theſe

Digitized by Google

theſe had been reformed by the goſpel, that is, by a law which repewed and confirmed and enforced the original law of nature. SEXTUS EMPIRICUS, an antient, and MONTAIGNE, a modern ſceptic, collected numerous examples of the ſame ſort, but to a very bad purpoſe; to ſhew, if they had been able, that there is no ſuch thing as a fixed immutable law of nature, which obliges all men at all times alike. They ſought it where it is not to be found; and, not finding it there, concluded it was to be found no where. This doctrine has been promoted by Pyrrhonians, Sceptics, and Academicians, between whom it is neither obvious nor worth our while to diſtinguiſh, as well as by dogmatical atheiſts; for they who doubted of God's exiſtence, or who denied it, could not fail to doubt of, or to deny, the exiſtence of his law. Of all theſe, it will be ſufficient to mention the admired CARNEADES, the ſum of whoſe diſputation upon this ſubject LACTANTIUS has preſerved; and although it be one of thoſe trite common-place citations which abound in learned writings, yet it deſerves a particular mention; becauſe it expreſſes, in very few words, the full abſurdity of thoſe who deny a natural law, and points out the two principal blunders on which their whole reaſoning proceeds.

CARNEADES then affirmed *, "that laws were "made by men, for their utility; that they were

* Jura ſibi homines pro utilitate ſanxiſſe, ſcilicet varia pro moribus, et apud eoſdem pro temporibus ſaepe mutata; jus autem naturale nullum eſſe. Omnes et homines, et alias animantes,

" therefore various, as the characters of thoſe " who made them; and changeble among the " ſame men according to the various circum- " ſtances of time: but that there was no law of " nature. That all men, and all animals, were " carried to their ſeveral kinds of utility by na- " ture: ſo that there could be no juſtice; or, if " there was any ſuch thing, it muſt be extremely " fooliſh; becauſe, in providing for the good of " others, the juſt would hurt themſelves." That laws were made for utility, both thoſe which we call civil, and thoſe which we call the laws of nations, that they are various as the characters of men, and changeable as the circumſtances of time, no one will deny. But will it follow that there is no ſuch thing as a natural law, ſuch as the wiſeſt philoſophers, and even the antient poets have acknowledged, although a little confuſedly, according to their cuſtom, yet in plain and direct oppoſition to this doctrine? a law, neither invented by men, nor enacted by human authority, " neque " hominum ingeniis excogitatem, neque ſcitum " aliquod populorum?" a law not co-eval with the divine mind, as TULLY * would have it, when he ſays " orta autem eſt ſimul cum mente divina;" but ſuch a law, as he deſcribes in the words that ſtand immediately before theſe, a law proceeding from the nature of things, " ratio profecta a re- " rum natura;" a law which did not begin when

mantes, ad utilitates ſuas, natura ducente, ferri: proinde, aut nullam eſſe juſtitiam, aut, ſi ſit aliqua, ſummam eſſe ſtultitiam; quoniam ſibi noceret alienis commodis conſulens.

* TULLY De leg. l. i.

it

Digitized by Google

it was firſt reduced into writing, " quae non tum " denique incipit lex eſſe cum ſcripta eſt," but when it firſt exiſted, " ſed tum cum orta eſt;" and it exiſted firſt when that ſyſtem of nature, from which it reſults, " unde profecta eſt," began to exiſt? The firſt part therefore of this academical declamation proved nothing againſt natural law; and CARNEADES might as well have affirmed that the Athenians had no laws before SOLON, becauſe SOLON gave them ſome; or that rapes were lawful at Rome before SEXTUS TARQUINIUS raviſhed LUCRETIA, becauſe there was no written law before that time which forbid them. The ſecond part contains two blunders, that run into one another. It is a blunder ſurely to aſſume that men, and all other animals, are carried indiſcriminately by nature to their end, utility, without diſtinguiſhing between natural inſtinct common to both, and ſuperior reaſon peculiar to man. It is a blunder ſurely to aſſume, in conſequence, that, ſince utility is their object, juſtice is a folly. Men may have pleaſure, to which inſtinct hurries them, but they cannot have happineſs, to which reaſon leads them, without juſtice, according to what has been already laid down: and it is wiſdom therefore, not folly, to forego the firſt in ſome inſtances, in every inſtance where the leaſt incompatibility is found between them, that we may ſecure the laſt. The good of individuals is ſo cloſely connected with the good of ſociety, that the means of promoting one cannot be ſeparated from thoſe of promoting the other: and SOCRATES was in the right to curſe

Digitized by Google

the men, who firſt divided, in opinion, things that cohered, in nature, morality and utility; "qui primum haec natura cohaerentia opinione "diſtraxiſſent *." I might have quoted the latter part of what LACTANTIUS makes CARNEADES ſay, and which is ſaid to ſhew the great hurt that juſtice would do, in order to ſhew more truly the great hurt that injuſtice does. If the Romans, and all thoſe who were poſſeſſed of empire, had been obliged to reſtore to every people the unjuſt uſurpations they had made upon them, theſe conquerors would have been obliged to return to their huts and to their antient penury, "ad caſas eſſe "redeundum, et in egeſtate et miſeriis jacendum." But it is almoſt too trifling to deſerve mention; ſince, transferred from the law of nations to the laws of particular ſocieties, it objects to juſtice the great miſchief of obliging a robber to reſtore to the owner what he has ſtolen from him, and denies that reſtitution is juſt, although reparation of injuries is plainly eſſential to juſtice.

IF we had all the volumes that have been written concering the laws, inſtitutions, cuſtoms, and manners of the different ſocieties of men, we ſhould be rather perplexed than informed concerning the true ſyſtem of natural law: and MONTAIGNE might challenge his readers, pretty ſafely, to ſhew him any one of theſe, which had the ſeal of univerſal approbation. But even this would not ſerve his purpoſe, nor afford any proof againſt

* TULL. De Off. I. iii,

the

the exiſtence of a law which human reaſon collects from the human ſyſtem, as he vainly imagined in his zeal for pyrrhoniſm. The laws of nature are truly, what my lord BACON ſtyles his aphoriſms, the laws of laws. Civil laws are always imperfect, and often falſe deductions from them, or applications of them; nay they ſtand, in many inſtances, in direct oppoſition to them. It follows from hence, not that there is no natural law, but that civil laws have been made without a ſufficient and conſtant regard to it. Erroneous opinions of philoſophers, unreaſonable inſtitutions of legiſlators, are often derived from true principles of nature, and may be traced up to them. The fountain from which they flowed was pure. They grew foul in their courſe; and no wonder they ſhould, ſince the channels through which they paſſed were infected with human paſſions, human prejudices, and human ignorance. Such laws, as cannot be traced up, even under theſe conditions, to the original of all law, are the arbitrary dictates of mere will, impoſed on ſome men by the force or fraud of others, and confirmed by education and cuſtom.

THUS is the law of nature hid from our ſight by all theſe variegated clouds of civil laws and cuſtoms, as the divine author of it is by thoſe of ſuperſtition and artificial theology. Some gleams of true light may be ſeen through them. But they render it a dubious light; and it can be no better to thoſe who have the keeneſt ſight, till

Digitized by Google

theſe interpoſitions are removed. Then, indeed, the objects appear in their full and genuine luſtre to every ſight; for that which hid them both could affect neither.

X.

MANY hypotheſes have been made to account for the beginning of civil ſociety, for the nature of it, and for the motives to it. All of them have ſome degree of probability, and might have ſome ſhare in framing thoſe political congregations and unions, by which mankind has been divided into diſtinct nations, and the great commonwealth, as the Stoicians called it not improperly, into diſtinct ſtates. But no one of theſe muſt paſs for univerſal, nor be ſuppoſed to have done the work alone. In general we may ſay, that the foundation of civil or political ſocieties were laid by nature, though they are the creatures of art. Societies were begun by inſtinct, and improved by experience. They were diſturbed early, perhaps as ſoon as they were formed, both from within and from without, by the paſſions of men: and they have been maintained ever ſince, in oppoſition to them, very imperfectly, and under great viciſſitudes, by human reaſon, which is exerciſed in particular ſyſtems of law for particular ſtates, in leagues and covenants between ſtate and ſtate, and in tacit agreements that conſtitute what is commonly called the law of nations.

THE

Digitized by Google

THE firſt principles of every thing, that requires human underſtanding and human induſtry to be employed about it, are rightly laid in nature; they are obvious to our ſearch, and we are able to diſcover and purſue the conſequences of them in ſpeculation and in practice. But in doing this, we are left, as I may ſay, to ourſelves. We owe the firſt diſcoveries to our own obſervation, and the progreſs we make afterwards to the ſtrength of our own underſtandings, to our application and induſtry. We may do this well or ill; we may do too little or attempt too much, according to the uſe, and the right or wrong judgment, we make of our faculties; for the bona and mala ratio, that COTTA inſiſts upon ſo much *, is nothing elſe.

IT is in great meaſure otherwiſe in the caſe of civil polity. In this we are not left to ourſelves. We are not left to make the diſcovery, nor to proceed, in conſequence of it, by the ſtrength of our own underſtandings. We are led to it by the hand of God, as it were, and even before we have the full uſe of our underſtandings. When God made man, he made a creature, the happineſs of whoſe being depended on his ſociability with animals of his own ſpecies. He made him therefore a ſociable animal, an animal capable of feeling the immediate pleaſure and advantage of ſociety.

* CIC. De nat. deor.

The

Digitized by Google

The neceſſity of natural precedes that of artificial ſociety; and the former, which is connected by inſtinct, prepares us for the latter, to which we are determined by reaſon. We are made capable of both in their turns. The infant cannot conceive the nature of thoſe covenants that conſtitute civil ſociety, any more than he can propagate his ſpecies. Neither his mental, nor his corporeal powers are arrived at their maturity. The ignorant man does not know them, becauſe he has not informed himſelf, nor been informed by others, about them: and he who is born ſtupid is out of the caſe. I ſay this the rather, to expoſe once more the futility of that argument which has been mentioned already. To prove that the child, whilſt he is a child, and the ignorant man, whilſt he is ignorant, can neither inſtitute civil ſociety, nor comprehend the nature of it, ſerves to no other purpoſe, than to compoſe to ſlumber a reader of common ſagacity, who perceives at one glance the different ſenſes, though equally true, in which men are reckoned qualified for civil ſociety, and fiſhes to ſwim, or birds to fly, or oaks to bear acorns *.

You poets have given beautiful deſcriptions of a golden age, with which you ſuppoſe that the world began. Some venerable fathers of the church have given much the ſame deſcriptions of another golden age, with which they ſuppoſe that

* Vide PUFFEN. Lib. vii. c. 1.

it

Digitized by Google

it is to end, and which will make some amends for the short duration of the paradisaical state, since the latter is to continue a thousand years. Now, though I do not believe that men were as good, any more than I believe that other animals were as tame, by nature, as you represent them to have been in the primeval world; yet I do not believe neither that such a state, as HOBBES assumed, ever did, or could exist, nor that men ever were in a state of absolute individuality at any time before the institution of civil society. How they came into the world, reason will tell us no better than history or tradition does. To suppose that the first of human kind were quickened into life by the sun, and were animated systems of mud, as the Egyptians did, I think, according to DIODORUS SICULUS, would be too absurd; neither could we conceive, if the hypothesis was admitted, how these human insects were able to provide for their wants, and to rear themselves up to manhood, whatever we assumed the physical constitution of the world to have been at that time. If we are persuaded then that this world, and the inhabitants of it had a beginning in time, we must of necessity assume that the first men and the first women, or that one man and one woman at least, were produced in full strength and vigor of body and mind, prompted by instinct to an act of which they might not foresee the consequence, and prompted by self-love, when they saw it, to love themselves in their children, and to nurse and educate their off-spring.

THUS

THUS natural ſocieties and paternal governments began. I ſhall not inquire how far the latter is founded in that blind act of generation, whoſe motive and end is the mutual pleaſure of man and woman alone. Much leſs ſhall I miſpend any time in comparing the opinion of GROTIUS *, which is favorable to paternal, with that of HOBBES, which is ſo to maternal authority †. This only I will obſerve, by the way, that if HOBBES advanced a paradox, it was ſuch an one as he might have maintained with advantage againſt GROTIUS, and even with more againſt FILMER, who left the word "mother" out of his quotation of the fifth commandment. GROTIUS did not preſume thus far, but he gives the preference to paternal authority, in the caſe of any diſpute between the two, on account of the pre-eminence of the ſex, "ob ſexus prae-"ſtantiam." Another writer would have urged that, if the right of parents over children was acquired by generation, as GROTIUS ‖ affirmed, the right of the mother ought to be preferred, in caſe of any diſpute, ſince her right by generation can never be doubtful; the father's may. She is always a real mother: he may be often a reputed father, and the argument "ob ſexus praeſtantiam" is, in this particular inſtance, more applicable to the woman. But, however this may be, the pa-

* Lib. ii. c. 5. † De cive, c. 9.
‖ Generatione jus acquiritur parentibus in liberos.

ternal

Digitized by Google

ternal authority, ariſing from education, is clear: and that inſtinct, which determines parents to take care of their children, gives them, by the law of nature, all that authority over them *, without which they could not take this care. This authority is and muſt be abſolute whilſt their children are unable to judge for, and to direct themſelves. It becomes limited when their children are able to do this without their help, and yet continue to live in the ſame family. It ceaſes when their children go out of their family, and acquire independency, or even paternal dominion of their own.

THUS far the law of nature is plain: and this is ſufficient to ſhew how we are led by the hand of God, that is, by the circumſtances in which he has ordained that we ſhould be born; by the neceſſary dependance of children, by the inſtinct of parents, by information, by habit, and finally by reaſon; how we are led, I ſay, to civil through natural ſociety, and are fitted to be members of one, by having been members of the other. This is the caſe of every one in particular, and has been that of mankind collectively conſidered.

ALL the inhabitants of ſome other planet may have been, perhaps, from their creation united in one great ſociety, ſpeaking the ſame language, and living under the ſame government; or too

* GROTIUS, ib.

perfect

Digitized by Google

perfect by their nature to need the reſtraint of any. But mankind is conſtituted very differently: and although the natural law of our whole ſpecies be the ſame, yet we are by nature incapable, on many accounts, of uniting under one form of government, or of ſubmitting to one rule of life. Our neareſt approaches to this ſtate are vaſtly diſtant from it; and even theſe were made by ſlow degrees, and with great variety of imperfection; although nature herſelf, by directing the firſt, made all the reſt the more eaſy, as ſhe made them the more neceſſary. Men were never out of ſociety; for if they were divided into families before they were aſſembled into nations, they were in ſociety ſtill from their original: and the want of comprehending that which is natural, and that which is artificial, properly diſtinguiſhed, under the ſame general term, has produced much confuſion in reaſoning on this ſubject, and has ſerved to maintain many a falſe argument. BAYLE*, for inſtance, denies that the peace, the happineſs, and even the preſervation of mankind, depend on ſociety. How does he ſupport his paradox? As ill at leaſt, as he ſupports the inutility of religion to government. He cites SALLUST to prove that the Aborigines in Italy, and the Getulians and the Lybians in Africa, had neither laws, nor magiſtrates, nor forms of government. He cites POMPONIUS MELA, and he might have cited many other authorities antient and modern, to much the ſame purpoſe; for authors, by repeat-

* Con. des Penſ. diver. 118.

ing

Digitized by Google

ing one another, propagate the ſame miſtakes very often, and increaſe the number of witneſſes, without ſtrengthening the teſtimony; which may have happened on theſe occaſions for aught he knew. But this he knew, this he ſhould have obſerved, and this he would have obſerved if the obſervation had made for him in this place, for he makes it in all thoſe where it does make for him, how much authors are apt to exaggerate in their deſcriptions, and the characters they draw. How barbarous were thoſe nations, who broke the Roman empire, repreſented to be, the Goths for example, or the Lombards? and yet when they came to ſettle in Italy, and to be better known, how much leſs barbarous did they appear, even than the Greeks and the Romans? What prudence in their government? what wiſdom in their laws? But I touch this without inſiſting on it. Let it be that the Aborigines, the Getulians, the Lybians, and the inhabitants of the inward parts of Africa, had neither written laws, nor civil magiſtrates, will it follow that they had no cuſtoms which were among them equivalent to laws, no fathers nor elders that ſupplied the place of civil magiſtrates, no forms of government becauſe they had not thoſe of civil government? Will it follow, in ſhort, that they lived without ſociety, becauſe they lived without political ſociety? The very paſſage cited from POMPONIUS MELA ſhews the contrary. They were diſperſed in families indeed, and theſe families were governed by no law common to them all,

Digitized by Google

all, nor by any joint conſultations. "In familias "paſſim et ſine lege diſperſi, nihil in commune "conſultant." Juſt ſo are the Arabs of the deſert, many of the Tartars, and other vagabond people at this day, not united by any national conſtitution; but ſo far from being without ſociety or government, that their ſeveral families, or tribes, or hords, are ſo many ſocieties, and often better regulated than thoſe that appear to be more civilized. BAYLE, and the authors he cites, had nothing in their minds but political ſocieties of human inſtitution, and did not advert to thoſe that are natural. When he affirmed "that theſe "people multiplied, and preſerved themſelves "without living in ſociety," and denied, on the authority of theſe examples, "that ſocial life is "abſolutely neceſſary to the preſervation of the "human race," he did not enough conſider that it was impoſſible they ſhould multiply without forming ſocieties, and that he might have ſaid juſt as well that a country, over-run with independent companies of ſoldiers, had none in it, becauſe theſe companies were not yet formed into legions or regiments.

ANTIENT traditions, ſacred and profane, how imperfect and uncertain ſoever they are, give us ſufficient reaſon, by their concurrence in this general account, to believe that mankind was at firſt diſperſed in families, which formed ſo many diſtinct ſocieties under paternal government. The moſaical hiſtory contains the deſcent of one, that of SETH,

Digitized by Google

SETH, down to the flood. There was no need of mentioning that of CAIN, which was to be wholly deſtroyed in this terrible cataſtrophe. The deſcent of the family of SEM, after the flood, is moſt carefully recorded, and thoſe of HAM and of JAPHET are occaſionally mentioned: for which difference a very good reaſon may be found, ſince the genealogy of the patriarchs, and of the people of God, was to be deduced from SEM. Our divines find a further reaſon. The Meſſiah was to proceed, above two thouſand years afterwards, from a branch of the ſame family: and therefore the greateſt care poſſible was taken to preſerve the genealogy, as well as to perpetuate the race; of the latter of which PATRICK gives a moſt remarkable inſtance in his Commentary on Geneſis. If the daughters of LOT committed inceſt with their father, we are not to aſcribe it to unnatural luſt, but to their innocence, their ſimplicity, and a laudable concern for the preſervation of their father's family; for they believed all mankind deſtroyed, according to IRENAEUS; or, at leaſt, they might believe that none were left who might go in unto them, "juxta morem univerſae terrae *." Our learned biſhop aſſumes, much more ingeniouſly and with greater regard to virgin modeſty, that theſe young women had the ſame eager deſire, which then poſſeſſed the hearts of good people, to fulfil the promiſe of the Meſſiah. It was that which put them on this otherwiſe mon-

* Vid. lib. Gen. c. xix.

Digitized by Google

ſtrous crime. It was that which ſanctified it, in the intention, though not in the event; for the two accurſed races of Moabites and Ammonites were the fruits of this inceſt.

XI.

I HAVE not ſpoken of this family to introduce the anecdote juſt mentioned, inſtructive and edifying as it is, but to ſhew, by an illuſtrious example, what the firſt ſocieties of men were, and how civil ſocieties aroſe out of natural, as natural ſocieties aroſe out of one another. When any of theſe grew too numerous to inhabit the ſame country, or diſſentions aroſe among them, as it happened in the caſe of ABRAHAM and LOT, and of ESAU and JACOB afterwards, they ſeparated. When the father of the family preferred one of his ſons to all the reſt, as ABRAHAM had done, and as it was neceſſary that ISAAC ſhould do in order to give JACOB the pre-eminence over ESAU, and the Iſraelites over the Idumeans, the families ſeparated likewiſe: and new families were formed by the ſwarms that iſſued from antient hives. The increaſe of families was not only great in thoſe prolific ages, as we may obſerve by the numerous poſterity of the two brothers ESAU and JACOB; but we may conclude, from reaſon and analogy both, that if families ſometimes ſeparated, they ſometimes united too, for mutual conveniency; and that in this manner ſeveral little dynaſties were formed, which had more

ſettled

Digitized by Google

ſettled eſtabliſhments than the vagabond families. How little theſe dynaſties were, we may judge by the defeat which ABRAHAM gave, with an army of three hundred and eighteen of his ſervants, to the four kings who had beat the five, and pillaged Sodom and Gomorrah. There has been much learned diſpute about the Egyptian dynaſties: and they, who have corrupted MANETHO more, very probably, than he did the truth, have delivered them down to us in ſuch a broken, tranſpoſed, interpolated condition, that nothing almoſt, which is probable, can be collected from them. Why ſhould we not believe that his thirty dynaſties were cotemporary, not ſucceſſive? Why ſhould the Egyptians not have been under the dominion of ſeveral petty kings, as well as their neighbours, when the title of king was beſtowed ſo very liberally? On the whole, it cannot be doubted, I think, that the firſt ſocieties of men were thoſe of families formed by nature and governed by natural law, nor that kingdoms and ſtates were the ſecond.

NEIGHBOURHOOD, an intercourſe of good offices, and, in a word, mutual conveniency, might give a beginning, by the union of independent families under compacts and covenants, to civil ſocieties. But the principal cauſe of ſuch artificial or political unions was of a very different kind. We cannot ſuppoſe that all the members of every family lived in a ſtate of uninterrupted concord. There was a quarrel, and one brother

Digitized by Google

aſſaſſinated another, even in the family of the firſt man. But ſtill in ſocieties, as confined as theſe, the father's eye was over the whole community; paternal authority, not the royal fatherhood of that ridiculous writer FILMER, was always ready to interpoſe, and the remedy of ſeparation was always at hand when every other failed. The ſtate of mankind altered extremely when families had been long ſeparated, whatever the cauſe of ſeparation was; and when the natural bands were not only looſened, but loſt and forgot in the courſe of generations; when there was no longer any regard to one common anceſtor; when there was no authority to interpoſe between different people, and to influence and direct their conduct, as paternal authority had done where different members of the ſame family were alone concerned: then mutual injuries became more frequent, and their conſequences more fatal.

As faſt as the diſtribution of mankind into families, and as paternal government ceaſed, men went out of a natural into a political ſtate. The former was ſo little what it has been repreſented, a ſtate of individuality, and individuality could never be properly aſcribed to creatures born in ſociety, and members of it as ſoon as born. Individuality belongs to communities, not to perſons. Families might be conceived as individuals, though not men, in the ſtate of nature: and civil ſocieties much more ſo in the political ſtate. The reaſon is plain. We have a natural ſociability, that

Digitized by Google

that is, we are determined by ſelf-love to ſeek our pleaſure and our utility in ſociety, as it has been ſaid; but when theſe ends are once ſufficiently anſwered, natural ſociability declines, and natural inſociability commences. The influence of ſelf-love reaches no further. Societies become in all reſpects individuals, that is, they have no regard to others except relatively to themſelves; and ſelf-love, that promoted union among them, promotes diſcord among them. Like the philoſopher of Malmeſbury's wild men, they act as if they had a right to all they can acquire by fraud or force: and a ſtate of war, ſo far from being the cauſe, has been the effect of forming diſtinct ſocieties, though by the general plan of nature the propagation of mankind makes it neceſſary to form them. Such is our inconſiſtency, ſuch are the contradictions that unite in the human character.

HOBBES, and CUMBERLAND in oppoſition to him, have ſaid much about the ſocieties of ants and bees. I ſhall compare them with thoſe of men no further, than the compariſon is immediately appoſite to my preſent purpoſe. The bees then, for it will be enough to ſpeak of one ſpecies, and the compariſon will hold beſt with that of which we have moſt experience; the bees, I ſay, co-operate viſibly to one end, the general good of their reſpective communities, not by choice, nor compact, moſt probably, nor by authority neither, for their monarchs have no ſtings to puniſh the diſobedient or the lazy; but by one in-

Digitized by Google

variable and conſtant direction, that of inſtinct. If reaſon could ſupply the place of inſtinct, be always at hand, and determine with as much force, men might be as good citizens as bees. But the rational creatures neglect their reaſon, or degrade her, in the intellectual economy, and make her the vile inſtrument of their appetites and paſſions. This is ſo much the caſe, that men would have been what HOBBES aſſumes that they were, if the divine wiſdom had not conſtituted them ſo, that they are, as ſoon as they come into the world, members of ſocieties which are formed by inſtinct and improved by reaſon. What reaſon cannot do by herſelf, ſhe does in ſome degree by the adventitious helps which experience enables her to acquire, by orders and rules of government, which every man concurs to maintain becauſe every man is willing to controll the paſſions and reſtrain the exceſſes of others, whatever indulgence he has for his own. I ſaid, in ſome degree: for, even with theſe adventitious helps, reaſon preſerves human ſocieties unequally, and by a perpetual conflict: whereas inſtinct preſerves thoſe of bees in one uniform tenor, and without any conflict at all. The paſſions rebel againſt reaſon; but inſtinct is reaſon and paſſion both.

THUS bees live with bees in their ſeveral hives, and have much advantage over men in domeſtic life. But their ſociability goes no further. Whenever any of theſe families, for to ſuch they may be compared, tranſmigrate or ſend out colonies

to

to ſeek new habitations, cruel wars enſue, if you will take the word of VIRGIL, as good a naturaliſt at leaſt as HOMER, for it. I have read ſomewhere that ORIGEN thought God had thus determined them, to ſet an example of making war to men. I had rather believe the father miſunderſtood or belied; and aſſume that the ſame inſtinct governs theſe animals no longer when they forſake their hives; ſo that their own ferocity, or that of their kings, carries them to all the exceſſes of inſociability. Every king is a JOSHUA, or an ATTILA, and under his command

corpora bello
Objectant, pulchramq; petunt per vulnera mortem.

As long as he lives there is no compoſition, no peace, no truce to be had: they fight uſque ad internecionem. As ſoon as he falls, they plunder their common hive, and the family or little ſtate is diſſolved.

Rege incolumi, mens omnibus una eſt.
Amiſſo, rupere fidem, conſtructaque mella
Diripuere ipſae, et crates ſolvere favorum.

IT is not quite the ſame in the caſe of mankind. Their families or hords, and the colonies they ſend out, unite ſometimes for mutual utility with others, as I have hinted. Reaſon, which had co-operated with inſtinct before, takes the place of it now. They coalite amicably by covenants, they make laws by common conſent, and

Digitized by Google

from being members of a natural, they become ſuch of a political ſociety. It ſeems, however, that theſe political ſocieties have been more frequently formed by compoſitions after wars, by a forced ſubmiſſion to the law of conquerors, and by aſſociations made to prevent conqueſt. We eaſily conceive that the inſociability of families made the ſtrongeſt invade the weakeſt, and the weakeſt unite againſt the ſtrongeſt. When larger communities were thus formed, the ſame inſociability, and therefore the ſame policy, continued; ſo that fear may be ſaid to have been a principal inducement in this manner to mankind, not to form ſocieties, as it has been underſtood, but to ſubmit to civil government.

Communities, formed by the union of different families, were not only more numerous than any particular families, but they were compoſed of heterogeneous parts, of members unconnected by conſanguinity, or the habit of living together, and connected only by accidental circumſtances, and the tye of covenants. Theſe circumſtances, or the diſpoſitions they had produced, might alter; and the tye of covenants, without a ſupreme power to enforce the obſervation of them, could not hold. Paternal authority, therefore, which had been ſufficient to maintain, in ſome degree, peace and good order in ſocieties compoſed of a few, and thoſe few members of the ſame family as well as of the ſame ſociety, might be inſufficient, on both theſe accounts, to maintain

Digitized by Google

tain the ſame degree of peace and good order in communities more numerous, and incorporated rather by art or by force, than by nature. Thus it became neceſſary to eſtabliſh a power ſuperior to that of the fathers of families, and, as faſt as men went out of the ſtate of nature, to ſubſtitute artificial to natural government. This was not done all at once, I ſuppoſe, nor every where in the ſame manner. But it ſeems moſt probable that theſe governments were in general monarchical. I know that ſome writers have thought otherwiſe; but they have no more right to affirm than I have, who am far from affirming. We muſt all gueſs, and probabilities muſt be weighed. It has been ſaid, "that when men, who were in "a ſtate of natural freedom and natural equality, "reſolved by common conſent to ſubmit themſelves to civil government, they choſe the democratical form, in order to keep this government in their own hands; and that the fathers of families, who had been uſed to independency, muſt have concurred in the ſame choice *." Now the very reverſe of this ſeems more probable to me. The fathers of families, who could not all be kings upon this change, would have preferred ariſtocracy to democracy; and the multitude would have preferred monarchy to both. The former would have been deſirous to retain ſome image of their ancient authority, and the latter would have ſlided into a form of

* Puff. L. vii. c. 5.

govern-

Digitized by Google

government that reſembled the paternal, to which they had been accuſtomed, much more eaſily than they would have conſtituted one entirely new, and the nature of which, for want of experience, would not have been very obvious to their apprehenſion. This eaſy tranſition, from paternal government to monarchical, ſeems to have been very well underſtood by LYCURGUS, who, when he was adviſed to eſtabliſh a popular government in Sparta, bid his adviſer try in the firſt place to eſtabliſh democracy in his own family *. One may conceive equally well how monarchy changed, by the abuſe of power, into ariſtocracy, or democracy; and how theſe changed, by the uſurpation of power, into monarchy. But the moſt antient traditions, and the authority of antient writers, I think, concur in eſtabliſhing this matter of fact, that monarchy, I do not ſay abſolute monarchy or tyranny, was the firſt form of civil government. There are many paſſages to this purpoſe, that might be collected if it was worth my while. But there is one in the beginning of ARISTOTLE's Politics ſo much in point, that it muſt by no means be omitted. He ſays, "that "regal government was the firſt; becauſe they, "who by their uniting formed the firſt ſtates, "had been before that time under the ſame regi- "men in families which they afterwards conti- "nued in kingdoms."

* PLUT. in vita LYCUR.

I KNOW

I KNOW that the power of theſe kings was limited, as their kingdoms were ſmall, in the heroical ages. But ſtill they were kings, and not the leſs, but the more properly and the more truly ſuch, becauſe they were reſtrained from being tyrants. When JUSTIN ſays that in the beginning of things the government of people and nations was monarchical *, he confirms the opinion I am of. When he ſays that the people were bound by no laws, and that the will of princes held the place of laws †, we muſt not imagine that theſe firſt monarchies were governments of mere will. The tenor of tradition contradicts any ſuch propoſition. I might quote the authority of THUCYDIDES, and others, againſt it; but I chuſe to quote that of JUSTIN himſelf againſt it, who ſays, in the ſame place, that it was not ambition, but a moderation tried and approved by all good men, that raiſed up princes to this dignity ‖. Thus the Medes, weary of that anarchy into which their families were fallen, choſe DEJOCES, a man famous for wiſdom, integrity, and juſtice, to be their king. It was not by virtue of their regal prerogative that theſe firſt kings gave laws written or unwritten, permanent or occaſional; for it is probable that in thoſe antient days there were few or no written

* Principio rerum, gentium nationumque imperium penes reges erat.

† Populus nullis legibus tenebatur, arbitria principum pro legibus erant, JUST. l. i. c. 1.

‖ Quos ad faſtigium hujus majeſtatis non ambitio popularis, ſed ſpectata inter bonos moderatio, provehebat. ib.

bodies

Digitized by Google

bodies of law: and you can tell better, than I can, whether HOMER once mentions the word in his poems. But however this might be, the firſt kings had neither arbitrary nor legiſlative power by virtue of any regal prerogative: on the contrary, they were choſen kings becauſe they were choſen legiſlators, and the goodneſs of their laws recommended them to the throne, and maintained them in it. The power of making laws was ſo far from being originally, and excluſively, annexed to monarchy, though it ſometimes made monarchs, that DRACO, who never was one, impoſed his laws, which were ſaid to be writ in blood becauſe of their extreme ſeverity, on the Athenians; that SOLON, who never would be one, repealed theſe laws, and eſtabliſhed others; and that PISISTRATUS, who made himſelf one, far from repealing thoſe of SOLON, governed by them. The firſt kings were limited monarchs. They earned the ſovereignty by great and good actions, held it from their people, and were accountable to their people for the exerciſe of it: ſuch I mean as came to their crowns by conſent, and in countries where common utility united families in civil ſociety, and neither conqueſt nor the fear of it.

XII.

THE attempts which ſo many learned and ingenious men have made, with infinite labor of ſtudy, to fix points of chronology and hiſtory concerning antient nations, that of the Egyptians particularly,

Digitized by Google

ticularly, have ſeemed to me, ever ſince I knew what they are, extremely ridiculous. They have ſeemed ſo the more, becauſe ſome general and uſeful truths may be collected, without any trouble, from the broken and fabulous materials they employ with ſo much trouble, and to ſo little uſeful purpoſe. The original of the Egyptians and the order of their dynaſties will never be known. The moſt antient traditions, ſacred and profane, ſuppoſing them all authentic, would be ſtill inſufficient for this end. But they are ſufficient for another. They ſhew us the nature of government, and the character of mankind, in thoſe early ages. They ſhew us the firſt kings, and the primitive government of Egypt, ſuch as I have deſcribed; and ſuch they continued to be as long as their gods reigned, that is, as long as their kings purſued the true ends of their inſtitution, and made their glory conſiſt in the good government of their own people, not in the conqueſt of others *. Osiris and Isis civiliſed their manners, and taught them to ſow corn and to plant the vine. The firſt Mercury taught them the uſe of letters, inſtructed them in the ſciences, and in arts, in that of phyſic eſpecially, both for the body and the mind; and was, beſides, their firſt or greateſt legiſlator. Other Mercuries ſucceeded Thot. Cotta makes them five in all †. Theſe explained the hieroglyphics of the firſt, improved on what he had taught

* Fines imperii tueri magis, quam proferre, mos erat. Intra ſuam cuique patriam regna finiebantur. Just. ubi ſupra.

† Apud Cicer. De nat. deor.

in

Digitized by Google

in ſix and thirty thouſand volumes or rolls, as ſome legends affirm, and completed that wiſdom of the Egyptians wherein Moses was inſtructed; for no man, except a Jew, will believe that the daughter of PHARAOH ſent into Greece to procure preceptors for her foundling.

THE Egyptians were little known to the Greeks, from whom all our knowledge of them is derived, till the reign of PSAMMETICHUS, much more than a thouſand years after the dynaſties of their gods, and their golden age, as we may call it; and yet even then the firſt principles of good policy and of a limited monarchy ſubſiſted. They pierced through various revolutions of government, and maintained themſelves in reverence during an immenſe number of years. The ſame thing has happened, and by the ſame means, among the Chineſe, whom I might have quoted for the ſame purpoſe as I quote the former; ſince their empire began as early, has laſted near three thouſand years longer, and reſembles that of Egypt in many reſpects; in theſe particularly, in a great reverence for antiquity, in a ſtrong attachment to thoſe primitive inſtitutions by which the order of their government has been preſerved, and their monarchs, how abſolute ſoever they may appear, have been reſtrained in the exerciſe of their power.

Now theſe governments, like all others which men have inſtituted, and to which they have ſubmitted by conſent, though they are artificial, are however

Digitized by Google

however inſtituted by virtue of the law of our nature, and are, in this ſenſe, of divine appointment. That ſovereignty, or ſupremacy, for ſuch it may be called in a true ſenſe, which was at firſt in fathers of families, not for their ſakes, but for the ſake of their offspring, and the propagation of the human ſpecies, belongs to one ſovereign or ſupreme magiſtrate; to more than one, to the collective or repreſentative body of the people; and ſometimes to all theſe, according to the various conſtitutions of civil governments, which were indifferent before they were made, but ceaſe to be ſo, and are obligatory on every member of the community, afterwards. There muſt be an abſolute power in every civil ſociety placed ſomewhere. As it is placed in one man, or in more, a monarchy ariſes, or an ariſtocracy, or a democracy: and, when it is divided between all theſe, a mixed government, which is, I preſume, the beſt of the four. By this repreſentation, ſo evidently true that no man who is in his wits can doubt of it, we may learn to deſpiſe and abhor certain venal or ſtupid writers in favour of monarchy. Some of theſe would perſuade, like FILMER, that ADAM was an abſolute monarch by creation; that his right has deſcended to kings; that all other men are ſlaves by birth, and never had a right to chuſe either forms of government or governors. Some again would perſuade, like HORNIUS, whom PUFFENDORF * cites and refutes, that altho' men have a right to make covenants and conſtitute civil

* Lib. vii. c. 3.

governments,

Digitized by Google

governments, they have no power to confer ſovereignty on princes. They may chuſe a king to govern them, that is, they may name a perſon on whom this ſovereignty, this majeſty, this power to govern, which they cannot give, will deſcend, by a ſort of divine emanation, from God, who can alone give them. FILMER's hypotheſis will be always lame, as well as abſurd, till ADAM's right heirs, for all other princes are by this hypotheſis no better than uſurpers, can be certainly diſtinguiſhed. They would be ſo by HARRY MARTIN's expedient, if they were born with combs on their heads, and every other man with a bunch on his back. But nothing of this kind has yet appeared among the phaenomena of nature; and till it does we muſt content ourſelves to acknowledge ſuch kings as we have. The hypotheſis of HORNIUS does not expoſe us to the ſame uncertainty; and we may know our king by much the ſame rule by which the Tartarians know their god. When a king is choſen, ſovereignty and majeſty deſcend immediately upon him, and he is completely a king. When a great lama is choſen, the ſoul of FOE enters immediately into him, and he is completely a god. There are many more fooliſh and knaviſh hypotheſes of the ſame kind; and the principal promoters of them, in every country, have been the clergy, whoſe flattery to princes had well nigh ſucceeded among us, ſo as to make the cauſe of tyranny what it has been, and ſtill continues to be made in other nations, the cauſe of God. But tho' we believe that monarchy

was

Digitized by Google

was the first form of civil government, and that paternal government might lead men to it; yet may we believe very consistently, and we must believe unless we resolve to believe against fact and reason both, that this, like every other form of government, is of human institution, established by the people, and for the people; and that no other majesty, since the word imposes so much, is inherent in it than that which belongs to the supreme power of every state, wherever that power is placed. Natural government was designed to last, and did last, till civil government became necessary. Nature instituted one, and directed human reason to the other. She meant the same in both cases, the good of the governed. Her institution and her direction could not have different ends. She intended, no doubt, that they, who had been treated like children under the influence of instinct, should be treated so likewise under the influence of reason.

XIII.

I HAVE said thus much, in order to shew that political societies grew out of natural, and that civil governments were formed not by the concurrence of individuals, but by the associations of families. It is the more necessary to repeat and to inculcate this distinction, because, for want of making it, and by representing mankind to themselves, like a number of savage individuals out of all society in their natural state, instead of consider-

Digitized by Google

ing them as members of families from their birth, and ſuch too long to be at any time the ſolitary vagabonds of the other hypotheſis, our beſt writers, even Mr. Hooker, and much more Mr. Locke, have reaſoned both inconſiſtently, and on a falſe foundation. Inconſiſtently, becauſe they ſometimes acknowledge paternal government to have preceded civil, and yet reaſon about the inſtitution of civil, as if men had been then firſt aſſembled in any kind of ſociety, or had been ſubject to any kind of rule: for to ſay that the law of nature was of itſelf ſuch a rule, and that every one of theſe independent inhabitants of the earth did, or might exerciſe juſtice for himſelf and others, on thoſe who violated this law, was language unworthy of Mr. Locke, and unneceſſary to his ſyſtem; and yet it is the language of his ſecond chapter in his ſecond book of Civil Government. Falſly, becauſe it is eaſy to demonſtrate that mankind never was in ſuch a ſtate of nature as theſe authors generally, the beſt and the worſt, have aſſumed, by demonſtrating that the generations of men could not have been continued in ſuch a ſtate. It is impoſſible we ſhould know, by hiſtory or tradition, how the firſt civil governments were eſtabliſhed. It is ſo impoſſible, that if any hiſtory or tradition pretended to give ſuch relations, they would loſe deſervedly all credit for this very reaſon. But we may gueſs with great probability, by analogy from what we know; and we may reject without preſumption the whimſies, that ſpeculative men invent in contradiction to this analogy, and to the viſible

Digitized by Google

viſible conſtitution of human nature. "If we may "not ſuppoſe men ever to have been in the ſtate of "nature," ſays Mr. LOCKE *, "becauſe we hear not "much of them in ſuch a ſtate, we may as well "ſuppoſe the armies of SALMANASSER or XERXES "were never children, becauſe we hear little of them "till they were men, and embodied in armies." But, with ſubmiſſion to this great author, the compariſon is not at all to his purpoſe, nor helps him in the leaſt to anſwer the objection he ſuppoſed might be made to him. No man would be mad enough, moſt certainly, to deny that all theſe ſoldiers had been once children, though he neither knew them nor had ever heard of them in their childhood. But, to make the compariſon appoſite, no man ſhould be able to affirm that all theſe ſoldiers had been members of other communities before they were embodied in theſe armies. The queſtion is not, whether men lived together in the ſtate of nature ſince the world was their common habitation, but, what the ſtate of nature was, whether it was compoſed of men who lived together in families, and whether theſe families, by uniting together, gave a beginning to political ſocieties; or whether it was compoſed of as many ſolitary individuals as there were men in the world, and whether theſe men, independent and equal one amongſt another, met amicably together, and ſet up government without any better preparation for it.

LOCKE inſiſts much on the natural equality and

* Civ. Gov. c. viii.

Digitized by Google

freedom of mankind; but he ſeems to carry his notions on the ſubject a little further than nature, and the reaſon of things, will allow. We may diſtinguiſh a perſonal and a ſocial equality. Nature has been far from conſtituting the firſt, and the creatures of no other ſpecies are probably ſo unequal in this reſpect as thoſe of the human. The utmoſt efforts of art cannot give them even the appearances of equality. But nature has really, if not ſo apparently, conſtituted the laſt; for the father was a ſon, and the ſon will be a father; the magiſtrate might have been a ſubject, and the ſubject a magiſtrate. Nature has determined nothing in theſe caſes, and therefore theſe laſt deſtinations, wnen they are made with a partial inequality in theſe ſocieties of men, are due ſolely to the folly of men, to their neglect of natural indications, not to the indications of nature, and to the imperfection of all human eſtabliſhments; ſo that the reverſe of them would take effect, for the moſt part, if the indications of nature were obſerved and followed. He who ſits on a throne would inhabit a cottage, and he who holds a plough would wield a ſcepter.

THAT all men are born to be free, is undoubtedly true; and therefore I think that they never were in ſuch a ſtate of nature as LOCKE aſſumes. His ſtate of perfect freedom, ſo he calls it *, would have been a ſtate of war and violence, of mutual and alternate oppreſſion, as really as that which

* Ib. c. ii.

HOBBES

Digitized by Google

Hobbes imagined to have been the ſtate of nature. He diſtinguiſhes, indeed, between liberty and licence, and ſuppoſes a law of nature in force to reſtrain the latter. But as he ſuppoſes, at the ſame time, that every man had an equal right to be the executioner of this law, as well as the judge, and to puniſh the offenders againſt it, not only for his own preſervation, but in order to preſerve mankind in general, it is plain that this hypotheſis implies the ſame abſurdities as the other, and that the ſtate of mankind under the law of nature, according to Locke, would have been very little, if at all, better than the ſtate of nature before there was any ſuch thing as law, according to Hobbes. The pretence of law in one, would have done as much hurt as the want of it in the other; and it is eaſy to conceive what tyranny and oppreſſion would have prevailed univerſally, if every man, beſides being judge in his own cauſe, had been an univerſal judge and executioner.

Mr. Locke doubted not but his doctrine would ſeem very ſtrange to ſome men; and, in truth, they muſt be very ſtrange men to whom it does not appear ſuch. He aſks, however, before it be condemned, to have this queſtion reſolved, by what right princes or ſtates can put to death or puniſh an alien for any crime he commits in their countries? The alien is not ſubject to their laws. They muſt puniſh him, therefore, by the law of nature; and, if by the law of nature every man hath not power to puniſh offences againſt it, he does not ſee how the magiſtrates of any commu-

Digitized by Google

nity can punish an alien. This is the question, this the argument; and a sufficient answer may be given to both, without consulting GROTIUS, PUFFENDORF, or any of the oracles of law. Though an alien does not owe allegiance to the sovereign power of the country wherein he is an alien, because two distinct allegiances cannot be due from the same person at the same time; yet he is under the protection of that government, and a subject of it who should rob or murder him would be punished by the laws of it. He is therefore liable to be punished by the same laws: and it is not true that they who make them and they who execute them are to him, in such cases as these, men without authority. The laws that concern men as denizens only, concern him not, for he enjoys none of the advantages peculiarly and exclusively attributed to denizens. But the laws that are necessary to preserve the peace and good order of a community concern every man who lives in it, and the alien submits himself voluntarily to them when he resolves to do so. He can be entituled to protection on no other condition. He accepts this condition: he is punishable therefore by his own consent; and the municipal laws, not the laws of nature alone, condemn him justly. But if the former did not speak to him, if he was not bound to hearken to them, as LOCKE affirms too generally and too rashly, would there be no difference between the right which he assumes to belong to every man by nature of punishing offences against her laws, as this man soberly judges the case to require, and that right which a court of justice has to proceed by

by ſtated rules, that reaſon authoriſes, and general conſent approves, againſt an alien who violates at once the particular laws of a community and the univerſal laws of nature? Would there be ſo little difference that one could not ſtand without the other, nor the conduct of princes and ſtates in puniſhing aliens in theſe caſes be juſtified, unleſs this ſtrange doctrine were admitted? I think no man who is capable of reflection will be of this mind. But thus it happens to men of the greateſt genius, when they grow to be over fond of an hypotheſis. They purſue the trains of their abſtract, that is their general ideas, wherever theſe carry them. Thus they are led to maintain propoſitions ſo little conformable to the real conſtitution of things, that he who reaſons leſs on general notions, and confines himſelf more to obſerve this conſtitution in every particular, will have frequent occaſions to diſcern a wide difference between the ſpeculations of philoſophers and the original invariable ſyſtem of nature.

I AM not as much perſuaded as Mr. LOCKE was, that all political ſocieties began from a voluntary union. Many of them did, and I think that this union was a voluntary union of families in ſocieties that may be called legal, becauſe they were made according to natural and divine appointment; for thoſe, that may be called illegal, will fall under another conſideration. I think thus becauſe the moſt early traditions, and the moſt antient as well as modern hiſtories, even thoſe that

are cited to proved the contrary, ſhew me mankind not only in their childhood, but in their manhood, aſſembled in families before they were ſo in civil ſocieties. JOSEPH ACOSTA, who is cited by LOCKE, ſays "there was reaſon to conjecture, "that the people of Peru had neither kings nor "commonwealths for a long time." But how did they live during this time? Were they ſo many individuals ſcattered about the country without any form or appearance of ſociety? By no means. They lived in troops as they do at this day in Florida: and we know how the people of Florida and North-America live at this day, by a multitude of perſons, miſſionaries and others, who all repreſent them as tribes or families, that obſerve the precepts and cuſtoms of their anceſtors, that have public aſſemblies for conſultation wherein their elders preſide, and that give the ſupreme command, over them, in time of war at leaſt, to perſons they elect, as other ſavages ſubmit to the more permanent authority of their caciques. I think it evident beyond all contradiction, from obſerving the conſtitution of human nature, phyſical, and moral, that mankind could not have ſubſiſted, nor have been propagated, if men had been ever out of ſociety, and that having been educated till their years of diſcretion in it, though they might poſſibly but rarely change ſocieties, they would never go out of ſociety, nor could become ſuch unaſſociated independent creatures, as they are ſuppoſed to have been by the other hypotheſis, till they became members of ſome political

Digitized by Google

political ſociety. I think it eaſy to conceive how men were prepared, by living in natural, to live in political ſocieties, and impoſſible to conceive how ſtrolling ſavages, who knew no ſubordination, nor had been accuſtomed to obſerve any rules of ſocial life, could be picked up one by one, as it were, and reduced at once under the laws of any civil government. Whenever this was done, paternal authority had, no doubt, a great ſhare in determining their families to unite with one another; but if we believe that the conſent of every family was collectively taken, we ſhall aſſume no more than what is actually practiſed among the ſavages on every occaſion of making war and peace, of huntings and tranſmigrations from one ſettlement to another. In ſhort, I think as tradition, hiſtory, an analogy to what paſſes in ſome ſort before our eyes, and the actual conſtitution of human nature lead me to think; whereas much abler men are led into different extremes, to ſupport different hypotheſes. To ſupport the divine right and abſolute power of kings, FILMER advanced the ſilly and ſlaviſh notion of royal fatherhood. Silly, indeed, as well as ſlaviſh it muſt be reputed; ſince though the power of the father was, on many accounts, greater and laſted longer than that of the mother, and ſince he could not therefore have talked of royal motherhood, if it had ſerved his purpoſe, with as much ſeeming propriety, as of royal fatherhood; yet is it certain that even the paternal was a temporary power, as it has been explained above; and that when it conti-

Digitized by Google

continued longer than the minority of children, this was due to gratitude, to habitual reverence, or to circumſtances of conveniency, and, in no ſort, to any natural right that the father had. To deduce therefore from hence a right and power, ſuch as FILMER would aſcribe to kings, is perhaps one of the greateſt abſurdities that was ever committed to paper. A very commendable zeal to explode theſe falſe notions of government, and to aſſert the cauſe of liberty, carried LOCKE into another extreme, very unneceſſarily, as I apprehend. He aſſumed the ſtate of nature to be ſuch as could never exiſt, and the method of eſtabliſhing civil ſocieties to be ſuch as could never be executed. Will it be ſaid that he meant only to give an abſtract ſyſtem of the natural rights of mankind? I ſhall aſk, if it be ſaid, to what purpoſe it was to make an abſtract ſyſtem of rights, that never did nor could exiſt, and of a method of eſtabliſhing civil government that never could be taken? It could ſerve ſurely no other purpoſe, than to give us a notion of natural liberty very different from the real conſtitution of nature, by which we are leſs able to preſerve liberty without ſome ſort or other of government, than we are liable to loſe it by the abuſe of government. I ſhall aſk, in the next place, whether the right of mankind to be governed by law, and not by will, under every form of civil government, be not as well eſtabliſhed by referring the original of all theſe forms to the conſent of men aſſembled in families, as to the conſent of men diſperſed, God knows

Digitized by Google

knows why, after having been educated in one kind of ſociety, and aſſembled, God knows how, to eſtabliſh another.

XIV.

AS it is much more reaſonable to judge, in all caſes, by a conſideration of the actual conſtitution of human nature, than to run the riſk of miſtaking what is true by imagining what may be ſo; it is likewiſe both reaſonable and neceſſary, on the ſubject ſpoken of here, to look as far back, as we have any light, on the natural and political ſtate of mankind; in which review we ſhall find ſufficient inducements to think that the ſtate of nature was not a ſtate of anarchy, but a ſtate of government, and that ſome form or other of it ſubſiſted at all times and in all places, however theſe forms may have varied. We diſtinguiſh between natural and political ſociety; but the real difference between them is not ſo great as we imagine. Nature inſtituted the former, but we cannot doubt that reaſon and experience improved it, without changing the form, from time to time, as the circumſtances of families altered. When theſe were altered ſo far that the ſame form would do no longer, men altered the form itſelf. They kept nearer to it in ſome ſocieties, and went further from it in others. The inſtitution ceaſed to be that of nature, it became that of art. But in all other reſpects there was no more reaſon, perhaps, to ſay, whenever and wherever this happened, for it

it would be ridiculous to aſſume that it happened every where at once, that a new ſtate of mankind aroſe in thoſe places and at thoſe times, than there has been to ſay ſo on every great revolution of government ſince, when monarchies have changed from elective to hereditary, when ariſtocracies or democracies have been raiſed on their ruins, or mixed governments on thoſe of all three.

MENTION has been made of the Egyptians, who appear to have been, if any people we know of were ſuch, the Aborigines of their country. The accounts which hiſtory gives of their political conſtitution, and thoſe anecdotes which tradition has preſerved concerning the original of it, incline, and almoſt determine, one to think that it was formed in the manner which has been aſſumed of forming political ſocieties for mutual advantage, or common defence; that the union of families compoſed ſeveral ſmall dynaſties, and the union of dynaſties one great empire; that it was ſo formed on principles of common utility, and without the inſociable deſign of invading others, till SETHOSIS, or AEGYPTUS, or SESOSTRIS, and other conquerors aroſe, who invaded the nations of Africa, of Aſia, and even of Europe, as the Ethiopians and Arabians invaded Egypt. The other great empire, the Babylonian or Aſſyrian, of which the Grecian antiquaries, who knew nothing of China, relate ſo many wonders, ſeems to have been formed in another manner.

LAWYERS

Digitized by Google

LAWYERS ſpeak of illegal communities of bodies of men who unite under certain conditions, and become ſocieties to break all the rules of ſociability; to rob, and to plunder, like the antient Greeks ſpoken of by THUCYDIDES, or the modern Arabs and Tartars. Some of theſe have never ſettled in civil governments. They have gathered from time to time, like vapours into clouds, have produced ſtorms, marked their courſe by devaſtation, and done great, but tranſient, miſchief. Other confederacies there have been, as illegal as theſe in their inſtitution, deſigned to invade the poſſeſſions of others, and to form political ſocieties by conqueſt againſt the law of nature, inſtead of forming them by compact agreeably to it.

As I aſſume with more probability on my ſide, than ſuch hypotheſes have generally, that the reigns of the moſt antient kings of Egypt were called the reigns of the gods, on account of the wiſe laws and inſtitutions by which they promoted the peace, and happineſs of that people; ſo we may aſſume that the Aſſyrian empire was founded and ſupported, from the firſt, by violence. Who NIMROD was, or BELUS, or any of thoſe that have been named in the variety and uncertainty of traditions, among the founders of this empire, when they lived, and what they did, it is impoſſible to ſay. Even MARSHAM, who laboured this point ſo much, with all his ſagacity, and

Digitized by Google

and all his learning, left it, as he found it, in the dark. But as NIMROD ſtands repreſented, in the moſaical hiſtory, a mighty hunter before the Lord, he gives us the idea of a warrior, and we may believe, without ſtraining the ſenſe of antient anecdotes too much, that BEL, BELUS, or BAAL, who was ſo ſanguinary a god, had not been a king of great moderation, nor had acquired power by perſuaſion rather than by force, by the arts of peace than by uſurpation and war. JUSTIN ſays that NINUS was the firſt, not to make war, but to change the nature of it *, and to extend his empire by ſubduing his neighbours. The Egyptian SESOSTRIS, and the Scythian TANAUS much more antient, had made war for fame alone, and, content with victory, had abſtained from empire †. Their kingdoms, which each nation reputed to be the moſt antient of the world, and which were ſo perhaps of the world they knew, had been eſtabliſhed long before theſe wars begun. Arts and ſciences were more improved among the Egyptians: primitive ſimplicity among the Scythians. But it is probable, that neither of them engaged in wars, till ſelf-defence made them neceſſary, or till the ambition of their princes gave occaſion to them. Then SESOSTRIS harneſſed monarchs to his chariot. Then the Scythians impoſed a tribute on Aſia rather as the trophy, than the reward, of their victory ‖. The firſt

* Avitum gentibus morem mutavit.
† Contenti victoria, imperio abſtinebant.
‖ Magis in titulum imperii, quam in victoriae praemium.

Aſſyrian

Assyrian kings, on the contrary, established their monarchy by force, in an age when the illegal confederacy of a few families was sufficient to give the most forward, and the most popular man amongst them the title of a mighty hunter, and the means of forming a political society on a principle of ambition, and by usurpation on the other little states, unskilled, and unable to resist, "rudes ad resistendum."

THERE must needs have been a multitude of numerous families, or little states, in these early days, and in the countries we speak of here, since JOSHUA conquered one and thirty kings in the land of Canaan. It is easy, therefore, to conceive how such a man as we assume NIMROD to have been, on the authority of scripture, and BELUS after him, if they were different persons, for that one was the SATURN and the other the JUPITER of the Greeks is not so very certain; that such a man, I say, might unite by consent both men and families of men, as fierce as himself, in confederacies to invade others. Whatever use they made of this, whether they contented themselves to conquer and to ravage, or whether, as they had united by consent, they obliged their neighbours to unite with them by force, it seems that NINUS profited of their success to do the last. He extended his dominion by victory; and as he extended it, he confirmed it. Thus the Babylonian empire was founded by force of arms, and thus it was maintained, till, as force had raised it, force

force deſtroyed it, and illegal confederacies put an end to what illegal confederacies had begun.

If we conſider the true ends of ſociety, to which the general nature and reaſon of things direct mankind, we ſhall find it hard to conceive how they could be induced to unite their families on any other motives than thoſe of common utility, and common defence, againſt the little robbers that have been mentioned; or how, when a ſuperior force made them ſafe from theſe, they ſhould chuſe to become great robbers themſelves, and to invade and conquer as if their happineſs had depended more on ſubduing other governments, than on a wiſe and juſt conſtitution of their own. But if we conſider the particular nature of man, wherein there is one principle that directs him agreeably to the general law of nature, and another which is nothing more than the impulſe of appetites and paſſions that are of ſubordinate uſe in the human economy, but were not deſigned to be the laws of it, we ſhall eaſily conceive how the conduct of mankind has become in theſe caſes, and almoſt in all others, repugnant to nature, reaſon, and their own common ſenſe.

The firſt impreſſions that are made on ſocieties, like thoſe on particular men, laſt long, and the worſt longeſt. The character of a few eminent perſons, nay of ſome one who has acquired fame, authority, and power, eſpecially if he has had the legiſlative in matters religious as well as civil, becomes

Digitized by Google

becomes that of a nation, grows confirmed by cuſtom, and paſſes for natural and reaſonable in deſpite of nature and reaſon. This happens in particular ſtates, and this has happened in the great commonwealth of mankind. If ſome men have been deified for the good, many have been ſo for the hurt, they did; and conquerors, the moſt noxious of all animals, have become objects of adoration. However unlike nations may be to nations in their diſpoſitions and manners, all of them, even the weakeſt, ſeek their own advantage real or imaginary, at the expence of others. Thus have the civil ſocieties of men acted towards one another from their primitive inſtitution: for if ſome ſet the example, the others ſoon followed it; and whilſt every particular ſtate has gone through various forms of government and revolutions of fortune, the univerſal ſtate of mankind has been little leſs than a ſtate of perpetual anarchy. Families kept men out of that ſtate of individuality which HOBBES, and even LOCKE, ſuppoſes: but political ſocieties have been always individuals.

XV.

BESIDES the two manners that have been mentioned, in which civil ſocieties were formed, there was a third, very near a-kin to the ſecond, that came into frequent uſe when the numbers of people increaſed in ſome countries faſter than their

Digitized by Google

induſtry, and the order of their government, made proviſion for them; or when, for ſome other reaſon, the greateſt part of a community, and the ſovereign power in it reſolved to drive out a ſmaller part that they judged noxious to the whole. This manner of eſtabliſhing new governments when it was done by force, and it was ſeldom done with the conſent of the invaded, was full as illegal, relatively to the law of nature, in the invaders, however ſoftened by pretences of neceſſity, as the ſecond. It was more bloody too, when they who defended their antient poſſeſſions were more able to reſiſt, and they who ſought new habitations were more numerous, than either of them had been when kingdoms and ſtates were firſt formed, and colonies were firſt planted. The inhabitants of Gaul were grown ſo numerous, that in the very beginning of the Roman empire, in the reign of the elder TARQUIN, the celtic Gauls, who ſacked Rome two hundred years afterwards, began to ſend their colonies abroad, at the inſtigation of their king AMBIGATUS *. He thought it neceſſary to exonerate his kingdom over-crowded with people, "exonerare praegravante turba regnum." He authoriſed the expeditions, by ſetting his nephews at the head of them, by giving them commiſſions to ſettle wherever the gods ſhould direct by auguries, "in quas dii dediſſent auguriis ſedes," and by levying ſuch formidable armies for this purpoſe as no nation ſhould be able to reſiſt,

* LIV. l. v.

"ne

" ne quae gens arcere advenientes poſſet." This account, that LIVY gives of the Celtic invaſions, may ſerve, in ſome ſort, for thoſe which other nations made on the Roman provinces, long after his time, and in the decline of that empire. The Oſtrogoths, the Viſigoths, the Vandals, and the Lombards, to whom the Franks, though an aſſemblage of adventurers perhaps, rather than one people, may be added, were the principal nations, who broke down the barriers of the Roman empire, and who eſtabliſhed themſelves in ſeveral provinces on the ruins of it. They were all detached to ſeek new habitations from the various and numberleſs families and ſocieties of people who inhabited Scythia, that is, the immenſe extent of country beyond the Rhine and the Danube, as far as the Baltic northward, and the Euxine and the Caſpian, at leaſt, eaſtward. We know little about them whilſt they remained in their deſerts, and that little is very confuſed, and no doubt very fabulous. But this in general is certain, their numbers increaſed ſo much in every ſociety, and the fertility of the country which every ſociety poſſeſſed, as well as their ſkill to improve it, was ſo little proportionable to the wants of ſuch numbers, that they were continually ſending forth new colonies to ſeek new habitations, one at the expence of the other, driving and driven out by turns. The ſame neceſſity, and the ſame habits of invading, continued when the Roman empire, divided by CONSTANTINE, and weakened by his chriſtian ſucceſſors, was no longer able to repel

Digitized by Google

their incurſions. They had too, beſides neceſſity, another ſtrong temptation at this time. The expeditions they undertook were in themſelves more inviting than any of the former, "haud paulò "laetiorem viam dii dabant," as LIVY ſays, when he compares that of BELOVESUS into Italy, with that of SIGOVESUS into the hercynian foreſt. They removed to better climates, to countries more fruitful, or more cultivated, as well as more adorned, than their own; and the ſurprize of ATHANARICUS, king of the Viſigoths, who had made a peace with GRATIAN for preſents, and principally for victuals, when he came to Conſtantinople, at the invitation of THEODOSIUS, is nothing leſs than ſurpriſing, though JORNANDES deſcribes it to have been extreme.

A MULTITUDE of examples might be brought of kingdoms and ſtates, that aroſe from ſuch tranſmigrations as theſe, of Greeks, of Phenicians, and of other people. Sometimes they were formed by agreement, a few inſtances of which are to be found in hiſtory and tradition, but much oftener by violence, and ſometimes by ſuch circumſtances of cruelty as were ſufficient to exterminate the lawful poſſeſſors: one inſtance of which, beſides thoſe already pointed out, requires a particular mention in this place. It is not only to be reputed more authentic than any other, becauſe it makes a part, and a principal part of ſacred hiſtory, but it is more full and more marvellous in all the particular circumſtances of it, and ſhews another

Digitized by Google

another occaſion, beſides that of a too great increaſe of people, on which one part of a community was deſirous to ſeek out new habitations, or was compelled to it by the other. The wandering family of ABRAHAM, that had hovered long about Egypt, and had gone thither often for bread, to the want of which theſe paſtors were much expoſed, ſettled in that country at laſt, under the protection of JOSEPH, and continued in it above two centuries. That they did not attempt to eſtabliſh a government of their own in it, like other ſtrangers who came from barren into fruitful countries, is eaſily accounted for by the ſmallneſs of their number, as well as by the ſituation of JOSEPH, and their relation to him. But it is not ſo eaſy to account for the patience with which they bore, after the death of JOSEPH, a cruel ſervitude of fourſcore years, to which the tyranny of the Egyptians had reduced them, when their number increaſed in every generation ſo vaſtly, that they could bring, at the time of the exode, ſix hundred thouſand fighting men into the field. This very increaſe might ſeem incredible in any other hiſtory, notwithſtanding the calculations that have been made to ſhew that it does not exceed the natural multiplication of a people among whom polygamy and concubinage are eſtabliſhed. But admitting theſe immenſe numbers, and this extreme patience of the Iſraelites, naturally impatient, raſh, and unruly, to be conſiſtent; admitting that the expectation of a promiſed land, whereof their father ABRAHAM had taken poſſeſ-

ſion for them by erecting altars in it, as the Spaniſh adventurers took poſſeſſion of ſeveral countries in America by erecting croſſes in them, which they conquered afterwards, and claimed by virtue of this right of poſſeſſion to belong to them: admitting this expectation, I ſay, as an additional reaſon why the Iſraelites ſubmitted to their bondage ſo long, and made no attempt to eſtabliſh an independent kingdom or commonwealth in Egypt; yet will it be hard to conceive how they could find it ſo difficult to withdraw themſelves out of this country, when MOSES determined them to it. An army of ſix hundred thouſand men was ſufficient to have conquered Egypt. The Arabians probably, and the Perſians certainly, conquered it with a leſs force than they might have employed merely to march out of it.

SUCH conſiderations may lead one to think that the accounts pagan authors give of their exode are not wholly fabulous, and that it is an example in point of the caſe I aſſumed, the caſe of people driven out of ſome communities becauſe they were for ſome reaſon or other not only burdenſome, but noxious to them. The Iſraelites were not guilty of ſedition nor rebellion. They bore their ſtripes patiently. But as theſe ſtripes made them willing to leave the country, an epidemical infectious diſtemper in the Lower Egypt might make PHARAOH deſirous to drive the inhabitants of that part of his kingdom into the neigh-

Digitized by Google

neighbouring deſerts; and if he followed them to the red ſea, it might be rather to recover the jewels, and the veſſels of gold, and ſilver, which they had ſtole under the pretence of borrowing, than to ſtop them and to bring them back. TERTULLIAN * has preſerved a tradition which favors this ſuppoſition; for he relates that the Egyptians ſent meſſengers to MOSES in the deſert to demand reſtitution, that the Iſraelites on their ſide demanded to be paid for their labor whilſt in ſervitude, and that an account being ſtated, the balance ſeemed to be much in favor of the latter. Thus you ſee that the Egyptians robbed the Iſraelites, not the Iſraelites the Egyptians, as it has been thought.

MR. SELDEN has given us the ſame ſtory †, and two others, as they are told with ſome little difference in the Babylonian Gemera, and a book called Bereſith Rabba. This over-learned writer does not decide whether the facts are true, or whether they are rabbinical inventions, "ingenii rabbinici "figmenta." They deſerve, however, to be mentioned, becauſe of their immediate relation to the anecdote juſt now quoted from TERTULLIAN, and to the right the Iſraelites had to the land of Canaan. The anecdote is much the ſame. The ſcene where it paſſed, and the perſons among whom, are alone changed. JOSEPHUS, and others after him and like him, have ſounded high the

* Adv. MARCIONEM, Lib. ii. c. 20.

† De jure nat. et gent. juxta diſcip. Ebraeor. Lib. vii. c. 8.

Digitized by Google

reverence and munificence, " reverentiam atque " munificentiam," says SELDEN, which ALEXANDER the Great shewed to JADDUS the high priest, and to the whole nation of the Jews, when he received them under his protection; for they purchased his protection, much as the priests of JUPITER HAMMON did, one by flattering prophecies, the other by a flattering genealogy. Three controversies, then, were decided in their favor at the tribunal of this prince against the Egyptians, the Africans, and the Ismaelites, or Arabs, according to the rabbins, those great compilers of jewish traditions. The Egyptians demanded restitution of the silver and gold which they had lent the Israelites about a thousand years before at the time of their exode, and insisted on the passage where MOSES says, that God gave his people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians *. But GIBLAH BEN PESISA the famous lawyer, who was counsel on the other side, pleaded that, six hundred thousand of the Israelites having served the Egyptians four hundred and thirty years, the former had a just demand on the latter for this service; and this debt, which was computed for a time so much longer than that of the bondage of the people of Israel, and for numbers so much greater than theirs at any time perhaps, but certainly during the far greatest part of the time that they were even known to the Egyptians; this debt, I say,

* Deum dedisse gratiam populo in oculis Aegyptiorum, ut postulata concederent eis, seu mutuo darent quae ipsi peterent.

we

we may well believe, exceeded the value of a few jewels, and veſſels of gold and ſilver, and ſome raiment, or old cloaths, that they carried away with them. In ſhort, the Egyptians were condemned, in this ſuit, at ALEXANDER's tribunal. So were the Africans, who demanded the land of Canaan, as the eſtate of their father CANAAN, and therefore their inheritance. The lawyer of the Jews quoted the curſe pronounced againſt the ſon of HAM, more unfortunate than guilty; aſked, if the poſſeſſions of ſlaves did not belong to their maſters; inſiſted that the Africans were ſtill ſuch to his clients in equity, though not in fact; and ſent them away in confuſion. The cauſe of the Iſmaelites, who pretended to be co-heirs with the Iſraelites, came on laſt; but they were ſoon ſilenced by producing the will of ABRAHAM, as MOSES recorded it, and in which the patriarch gives all his eſtate to ISAAC, except ſome legacies to the children he had by his concubines. Well might SELDEN ſay, that theſe ſuits were of a wonderful nature, "mirae ſunt hae diſceptationes forenſes," wherein both ſides agreed to have the cauſe decided by arguments drawn from the law of the Jews, from their hiſtory, and from their interpretations of both, without any regard to a preſcription of ſo many ages. But it is time that I return to ſpeak of the manner in which the Iſraelites proceeded in the acquiſition of new habitations, and in forming not only one commonwealth the more in the world, but the moſt ſingular eſtabliſhment, eccleſiaſtical and civil, that ever was formed; for ſuch

it

Digitized by Google

it muſt be allowed to have been, unleſs any one ſhall think that it appears to us more ſingular than it really was, becauſe we do not know all, as we know ſome of the laws, cuſtoms, and pretenſions of other antient nations.

When I include with the Iſraelites in this tranſmigration many of the other inhabitants of the Lower Egypt, and ſuppoſe that a common diſtemper rather, than a common religion, unleſs that religion was idolatry, united them in it, nothing is aſſumed unreaſonably, as every one, who conſiders how little fit the Iſraelites, ſo prone to idolatry themſelves, were to convert others from it, muſt agree. But whatever the religion of this mixed multitude of Iſraelites and Egyptians was before they put themſelves under the conduct of Moses, they became the ſame people in this, and in every other, reſpect afterwards. They entertained the ſame hopes, and marched with confidence under the ſame leader to conquer new habitations. Well might they march with this confidence, when miracles accompanied them in one continued ſeries: and it is even ſurpriſing that they ſhould deſpond at any time, after the firſt miracle had been wrought at the paſſage of the red ſea, though Josephus goes out of his character on this occaſion, and, inſtead of magnifying, diminiſhes the wonder, by comparing this paſſage to that of Alexander's army, who marched on the ſtrand, or waded through ſhallow water along the pamphilian coaſt.

Digitized by Google

THERE were, beſides the miracles, many circumſtances in this famous tranſmigration of the Iſraelites, which deſerve our notice for their particularity. One of theſe is ſo much to the preſent purpoſe, that it muſt be mentioned. The Iſraelites remained forty years in the deſert before they undertook the conqueſt of the promiſed land; a time ſufficient to wear out the leproſy, if they were afflicted with that diſtemper, as profane hiſtory aſſerts, the authority of which muſt not be lightly rejected, ſince Jews and Chriſtians both are ſo glad to lean upon it whenever it ſerves to explain or confirm any point of ſacred chronology or hiſtory, and ſince the impertinence of thinking it ſufficient for that purpoſe, and inſufficient for any other, would be too groſs. There is another reaſon given, in the hiſtory aſcribed to MOSES, why the Iſraelites were kept ſo long in the deſert. When they came to the borders of the promiſed land, they mutinied, diſtruſted God, who was already declared their God, their king, and the general of their armies. They threatened to chuſe another leader and to return to Egypt. Upon this provocation it is ſaid that God reſolved to keep them, as he did keep them, wandering in the wilderneſs till the whole generation, of twenty years and upwards, except JOSHUA and CALEB, was dead. Then, and not ſooner, they paſſed the Jordan.

To this reaſon, founded ſolely in the anger of God, may we not preſume to add another, which pro-

Digitized by Google

proceeded from political conſiderations? When, I ſay, political conſiderations, I mean thoſe of MOSES, not thoſe of God. Far be it from me to account for the reaſons on which the economy of Providence proceeds, when theſe reaſons are not plainly revealed to me in the word, or works of God. Far be it from me even to aſſume that infinite wiſdom is directed by conſiderations of human policy. But it is neither licentious, nor profane, to gueſs at thoſe which the lawgiver of the Jews might have, and I ſhall do it on this occaſion without any ſcruple.

As ſoon as MOSES had brought the mixed multitude into the deſert, the decalogue was given, and other laws were publiſhed. He kept them in this ſtation more than a year, and during that time the ſanhedrim was eſtabliſhed, many laws, political, judicial, and ceremonial, were promulgated, and an entire ſyſtem of religion and civil government was formed. All theſe inſtitutions were enforced, not only by miracles, but by a moſt rigorous puniſhment of offenders; witneſs, among ſeveral, that maſſacre which the Levites made of three thouſand men in one day, when they were commanded, without any other form of proceeding, to take every man his ſword, and to ſlay his neighbour. Seven or eight and thirty years of ſuch government as this, of a theocracy, wherein MOSES, who converſed familiarly with God, ſpoke in his name, and delivered, and executed his orders,

Digitized by Google

orders, could not fail to make ſtrong impreſſions, and to form ſtrong habits in a new generation of men, who had been bred up under it. To confirm theſe impreſſions, and theſe habits, at the end of the fortieth year, juſt before the death of Moses, this legiſlator renewed the covenant, ſo it was called, between God and this people, repeated the law, exhorted them by promiſes and threatenings to a ſtrict obſervation of it, and ſent them forward, not to conquer and ſubdue, but to exterminate a whole race, who were devoted by God to deſtruction, and whoſe country had been given to his favorite people, the Iſraelites, ſome ages before, even before they were a people.

Other nations, thoſe for inſtance who eſtabliſhed new governments in ſeveral provinces of the Roman empire, conquered, and ſubdued; but did not ſeek to exterminate. The Franks proceeded thus in Gaul, the Viſigoths in Spain, the Oſtrogoths and the Lombards in Italy. Driven out of their old habitations by force, or by want, they ſought for new ones in better climates, and countries more fruitful than their deſerts. Their ſpies viſited the lands they deſigned to conquer; and as that "which flowed with milk and honey" tempted the Iſraelites, thoſe that abounded with bread, and fruits, and wine, invited them. But when they had defeated all oppoſition by the force and terror of their arms, they ceaſed to be enemies, and the victorious and the vanquiſhed ſoon became one people. They mixed together and lived under common laws.

Digitized by Google

laws. But this could never be the caſe between the Iſraelites and any other nation. The firſt principle of their policy, eccleſiaſtical and civil, was inſociability: and accordingly their manners were rendered unſuitable to the common nature and genius of mankind, as that great divine Dr. BARROW expreſſes himſelf, in his Expoſition of the creed. "They were a choſen people, they were "holy, and the reſt of mankind profane." God dictated their law, he inſtituted, nay he adminiſtered their government, for which purpoſe he reſided among them, and the Levites carried him before them in a wooden trunk, between the cherubim *, as your prieſts pretend to carry him about in a gold or ſilver box. In a word, as abject as this people had been in Egypt, MOSES had taught them to think more highly of themſelves in the deſert, and they came out of it the moſt inſociable nation upon the earth; ſo inſociable, that they could be nothing leſs than tyrants when they conquered, nor any thing better than ſlaves when they were conquered. This has been their caſe too. Their traditions boaſt a few centuries of proſperity and triumph; but in almoſt all ages, before the coming of CHRIST, as well as ſince, they have been, what TACITUS calls them, "viliſſi-"ma pars ſervientium." As they were formed to this character of inſociability and inhoſpitality in the deſert, ſo they came out of it, like beaſts of prey, thirſting after blood. The Huns, begot

* Arca cherubinis inſtructa, Dei vehiculum, et praeſentiae ſuae pignus. SPEN. De theo. Jud.

by

Digitized by Google

by devils, who inhabited mount Caucaſus, on ſcythian witches *, ſhewed leſs inhumanity when they were conducted by an hind, whom they followed, as a guide ſent them by the gods, into Europe †. ATTILA extended his conqueſts further than JOSHUA; but it may be doubted whether he ſhed more blood. More cool blood he did not moſt certainly. ATTILA gave quarter often, JOSHUA never; and the five kings who hid themſelves in a cave at Makkeda, and who were murdered by the latter, after he had deſtroyed their armies, and made himſelf maſter of their country, would have been ſpared by the former. It was criminal among the Iſraelites in his time, and it was ſo much later, to be content with conqueſt, and with ſpoil, or to ſhew mercy to thoſe they had robbed.

BY ſuch a conduct, as we have deſcribed agreeably to the ſcriptures, this Egyptian colony eſtabliſhed itſelf in Paleſtine, and formed a civil ſociety in the laſt mentioned manner. There was not above one city, I think, with whom they made peace. None eſcaped the edge of their ſwords, except ſuch as they could not conquer, and ſuch as found refuge in foreign countries. Some found it among the Phenicians: for to ſay that the Phenicians deſcended from theſe refugees, is to affirm what neither has been nor can be proved. Some found it in other countries, in Afric very

* IORN. Hiſt. Got. † Ib.

probably,

probably, ſince PROCOPIUS * ſpeaks of pillars that remained in the Tingitana with this inſcription; "We are they who fled from the face of JOSHUA "the robber, the ſon of NANE." Thus you may ſee how the prophecy of NOAH was fulfilled; which ſeems ſo plain to BOCHART, and other great ſcholars, and which is ſo little intelligible in the terms and in the application of them. But whatever becomes of the prophecy, the conqueſt of CANAAN by this colony from Egypt is the ſtrongeſt example, that can be produced, of the miſchiefs brought on mankind in the eſtabliſhing of civil ſocieties by violence, and therefore much to my preſent purpoſe.

XVI.

THOUGH the eſtabliſhment of civil ſocieties originally, and the maintenance of them ſince, have cauſed, in the order of providence, perpetual wars, and much of that miſery which injuſtice and violence bring on the world, "tot bella per orbem, tam multae ſcelerum facies," yet the neceſſity of eſtabliſhing and maintaining them ariſes from the conſtitution of human nature, and is therefore indiſpenſible. The great commonwealth of mankind cannot be reduced under one government, nor ſubſiſt without any. Juſt ſo we may obſerve that the laws and conſtitutions of particular ſocieties are every where various, in a multitude of inſtances oppoſite, and in many abſurd.

* In Vandalicis.

Laws

Digitized by Google

Laws and conſtitutions are however neceſſary to be made, and, when they are made, to be kept: ſo that we may apply to all theſe caſes a paſſage in TERENCE, much more properly than it is applied by GROTIUS in favor of abſolute power *, "Aut "haec cum illis ſunt habenda, aut illa cum his "amittenda ſunt."

BUT now, ſince the law of nature tends to promote the peace and happineſs of mankind, and ſince this law is immutably the ſame at all times, and in all places, for which reaſon ARISTOTLE compared it to fire, that warms or burns alike in Perſia and in Greece; how comes it to paſs that the means preſcribed by it anſwer the ends of it ſo ill? The anſwer is ſhort, but full: becauſe theſe means are employed by men whoſe imperfection is ſuch, that all they do muſt be, of courſe, imperfectly done. Whether they are compounded of two ſubſtances, or no, may be doubted: but that they have in one ſubſtance, or one nature, two principles of determination, cannot be doubted. Affections and paſſions, excited by immediate objects of apparent good, are therefore continually in action; and are excited independently of the will, which they determine afterwards. But reaſon is a ſluggard, that cannot be ſo excited. Reaſon muſt be willed into action: and as this can rarely happen when the will is already determined by affections and paſſions, ſo, when it does hap-

* De jure belli et pacis, L. i. c. 3. TER. Heaut.

pen, a ſort of compoſition generally follows between the two principles: and if affections and paſſions cannot govern abſolutely, nor even ſubject reaſon to ſerve as their inſtrument, they require and obtain more indulgence from her than they deſerve, or than ſhe would ſhew them if ſhe was entirely free from their force, and from their ſeduction.

These reflections, which have been touched upon already, may account for the unnatural manner in which the law of nature has been executed by civil ſocieties; and for the abſurd manner in which it has been copied, and improved too, as they pretend, by civil laws. Had the reverſe of all this been done in a cloſer conformity to the law of nature, the moral ſtate of mankind had been truly paradiſiacal; but it would not have been human. We ſhould not have been the creatures we were deſigned to be, and a gap would have been left in the gradation of created intelligences. The tables of the law of nature are hung up, as it were, in the works of God, and are made obvious to the ſight of man, not becauſe he is able to obſerve them in their whole extent and in every part alike, but that he may keep them conſtantly in view, and depart as little as poſſible, in the midſt of ſo many infirmities and ſo many temptations, from them. God has ſhewn us wherein our wiſdom, our happineſs, and the perfection of our nature conſiſt; and he has left us to purſue theſe ends by the uſe of our reaſon. But, reaſon

Digitized by Google

not being given to all alike, and being very imperfectly given to thoſe who poſſeſs the greateſt ſhare, our wiſdom, and our happineſs are very imperfect likewiſe; and the ſtate of mankind is, upon the whole, a very imperfect ſtate. We look up much higher than we are able to riſe.

WHATEVER violations of theſe laws may have been frequently committed, by particular men, and upon particular occaſions, none that were deemed to be ſuch, and perhaps few that might be called ſuch ſtrictly, have been enacted into laws, or have grown up into eſtabliſhed cuſtoms, by the plenary, or leſs plenary, permiſſion which civilians ſpeak of; one of which gives a right to do, and the other exempts from puniſhment for doing. I ſcarce believe, on the credit of antient and modern authors, many of the ſtories which are told concerning the manners of people, whom they call ſavage or barbarous. But, if I believed them all, I would ſtill maintain that there were in Greece, and at Rome, as many things repugnant to the law of nature enjoined, or at leaſt permitted, as can be produced from the relations we have of the people of Colchos, of the Maſſagetae, or of the Getulians; and further, that, if there are not in our civiliſed and enlightened age as many, there are ſome that exceed, in injuſtice and inhumanity, all that we are told of Iroquois, Braſilians, or the wildeſt inhabitants of African deſerts. The great and principal difference lies here: our legal violations of natural law have a ſolemn varniſh of policy, and

Digitized by Google

even of religion, which the caſuiſts of the law and thoſe of the goſpel throw over them, and which always diſguiſe, though they cannot always hide them. Illiterate ſavage nations have no ſuch varniſh to employ, and their laws and cuſtoms appear to every eye, but their own, as unnatural and abominable as they really are. To this it may be added, that they who can write have a great advantage over thoſe who cannot, in all ſuch caſes. They can extenuate and exaggerate matters of fact, and they ſeldom fail to do it with no more regard to truth, than is juſt neceſſary to make the falſehood paſs. If we had the hiſtory of Canaan writ by a Canaanite, that of Carthage by a Carthaginian, or that of Mexico and Peru by a Mexican and Peruvian, figure to yourſelf how the hoſpitality, the fidelity, the innocence, and ſimplicity of manners, of all theſe people, would be exemplified in various inſtances, and what further proofs would be brought of the ferocity, the treachery, the injuſtice, and cruelty of the Iſraelites, the Romans, and the Spaniards, of the firſt and the laſt eſpecially.

It has been ſaid that "the tables of natural law "are hung up in the works of God, and are ob-"vious to the ſight of man." They are ſo. They are ſo obvious, that no man, who is able to read the plaineſt character, can miſtake them; and therefore no political ſociety ever framed a ſyſtem of law in direct and avowed contradiction to them. No, not even the Jews, who might think, and who did think, that they had little concern in the law of

Digitized by Google

of nature, since the author of nature had given them a particular law. They might justify their neglect of the former in much the same manner that OMAR justified the order he gave for burning the Alexandrian library; and, by what some of their rabbins have said, they seem to do little else. If the law of nature contains nothing more than the written and oral law of MOSES, it is unnecessary, might they say; and the saying would be worthy of them. If it contains any thing which is not in the law of MOSES, or which differs from that, it ought to be destroyed. But, however, they acknowledged in some sort a law of nature, since they acknowledged a law antecedent to that of MOSES, and given to all the sons of NOAH.

UPON the whole, the law of nature is too evident, and too important, not to have been always the law of laws. Such it has been reputed, and as such it has been respected, not only by the most famous legislators and philosophers, but by those who made the first rude essays towards the establishment of civil government. Inward consciousness, and outward observation, could not fail to make it known to them, and to the fathers of families, or the patriarchs of mankind before them. The errors about it, and the contradictions to it, that abound, and have always abounded, in the laws and customs of societies, proceed from causes of a very different nature, and very consistent with all that has been said of it. The law is plain, but the precepts it contains are general. Reason collects

Digitized by Google

them eaſily from the whole ſyſtem of God's works, from the conſtitution of human nature, the conſequences of human actions, and the invariable courſe of things. But then to make the greateſt part of theſe general precepts as uſeful to human kind as the divine lawgiver intended them to be, reaſon has a further taſk aſſigned her. Reaſon muſt be employed to make proper and neceſſary deductions from theſe precepts, and to apply them in every caſe, that concerns our duty to God and man, according to the different relations in which we all ſtand to both, and the different places we hold in ſociety.

Now human reaſon being at beſt as fallible as it is, and having been as little informed by experience as it was in the early ages when mankind began to gather into political ſocieties, a multitude of falſe deductions and wrong applications could not fail to be made: for nothing can be more true than this obſervation, that the difficulty of applying general, and even common, notions to particulars, is one great cauſe of the errors and misfortunes of mankind. Theſe deductions and applications were made diverſly among divers people: and every one accepting thoſe of their own growth for true dictates of nature and reaſon, it is eaſy to conceive what numberleſs prejudices they produced, and how the laws, cuſtoms, opinions, and manners of nations have been rendered as various, and as oppoſite in the very ſame reſpects, as they are and have always been. Theſe prejudices, for ſo they may be properly named, were at firſt univerſally, as

Digitized by Google

as they are ſtill in many parts of the world, the prejudices of real ignorance. Thoſe of fantaſtic knowledge ſucceeded theſe, wherever men advanced from ſimplicity to refinement, "a neceſ-"ſariis ad elegantiora:" and which of theſe have done moſt hurt may be diſputed. Thus much is certain: There were prejudices of ſuperſtition to corrupt religion; and prejudices in favor of licentiouſneſs and of tyranny both to corrupt the firſt principles of civil government, and to perpetuate error: ſo that when men of different families and countries, and all fraught with different prejudices, mingled one way or other in the ſame ſocieties, it is no wonder that their ſyſtems of religion and government were ſuch as we find them in all ages.

THE confuſion was ſo great that the laws of nature, and thoſe of poſitive inſtitution, were but ill diſtinguiſhed, and that ſome, or all, of the firſt kind paſſed for laws of the ſecond, whilſt ſome of the ſecond paſſed for laws of the firſt. Such examples may be found, particularly among the Jews, about whom, of all the antient nations, we are the moſt concerned to be inquiſitive, and of whom it is hard to ſay whether their traditions, or their reaſonings upon them, are moſt precarious. They acknowledged in ſome ſort, as it has been ſaid, a law of nature, ſince they acknowledged a law antecedent to that of MOSES, and unwritten precepts of univerſal and perpetual obligation. The rectitude of theſe precepts is manifeſt, and unknown to no man, "rectitudo eſt manifeſtior, utpote

" nemini fere non agnita," as Mr. SELDEN says*, ſpeaking after the rabbins. But theſe precepts were not collected by human reaſon, from the conſtitution of nature. They were revealed by God himſelf to NOAH, the Jews affirm; and were deſigned for all his poſterity, as they were renewed to the Iſraelites, at the ſtation in Mara, with a precept about keeping the ſabbath, and other additional precepts. I enter into theſe particulars in order to obſerve only, what an unnatural jumble this people made of ſeven principal precepts, which compoſed, according to them, a code of natural and univerſal law, and the original ſource of all law, " primordialem legem et matricem " omnium præceptorum Dei †." There is nothing, perhaps, more abſurd nor ridiculous in the whole jewiſh ſyſtem.

No doubt can be entertained whether the law of nature forbids idolatry, blaſphemy, murder, theft, and, I think, inceſt too, at leaſt in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word, and in the higheſt inſtance of it. But ſurely none, except rabbins, could have blended up with theſe a precept that forbids the eating the member of a living animal; which is ſuch a piece of cruelty, that I ſhall not believe on the word of MAIMONIDES, of ARNOBIUS, or any other author, that the kings of the nations, or the moſt enthuſiaſtic bacchanals, did it in the celebration of their idolatrous feaſts, nor even that the Iſraelites, who were ſo prone to ſpill

* De jure nat. et gent. juxta &c. l. i. c. 10. † Ib.

blood,

blood, were as fond of ſwallowing it in this filthy manner, freſh and reeking. This circumſtance alone would be ſufficient to prove, that the praecepta Noachidarum were an invention of the talmudiſts, whoſe practice it was to forge, and who wanted ſkill and knowledge to make their forgeries probable. A natural law againſt a practice, to which there is no inducement in human nature, though men are carnivorous animals, is moſt rabbinically, that is, impertinently, aſſumed. He muſt be a rabbin too, who is able to diſcover how a precept, to regulate judicial proceedings, can be ſaid to have made another head of natural law. SELDEN * treats of this in the laſt place, becauſe he thinks it relative to the other ſix, which would have been given in vain, if judgments had not been eſtabliſhed to puniſh the violation of them. But how could all theſe judgments be eſtabliſhed by one of theſe ſeven precepts? By judgments the talmudiſts underſtand all conſtitutions, cuſtoms, actions, circumſtances, deciſions, and law caſes, which are of moment in criminal cauſes. It would be too ridiculous to ſuppoſe judgments, in this ſenſe, eſtabliſhed by a ſingle precept of the law of nature. What did this precept then command? A tribunal to be erected for the trial of all offences againſt theſe laws, or a council chamber wherein new laws, for enforcing theſe, ſhould be made †? Or did God, by one precept of natural

* Lib. vii. c. 4.

† ---Domus judicii nunc pro tribunali aut foro---nunc pro loco aut coetu, quo ſanciuntur novae leges---ſumitur. Ib.

and

Digitized by Google

and univerſal law, confirm and ratify all future judgments that ſhould be given, and all future laws that ſhould be made by human authority, to ſecure the obſervation of ſix other precepts? I can think ſo the leſs, becauſe the judgments of his choſen people were often repugnant to the law of nature, truly ſo called, in particular inſtances; and, becauſe, in general, a ſpirit of injuſtice, which eſtabliſhed one rule for themſelves and another for every other perſon, ran through all their judicial proceedings.

ANOTHER inſtance of that confuſion which aroſe in men's notions concerning laws of nature, and laws of poſitive inſtitution, might be drawn from the decree of the firſt chriſtian council, in which the apoſtles and the elders impoſed no other load on the converts from paganiſm, than abſtinence from things offered to idols, from blood, from things ſuffocated, and from fornication, according to the copy we have of it; all of which, as well as circumciſion, and other obſervances from which theſe converts were exempted, made parts of the moſaical inſtitution*. But it appears by antient manuſcripts, and by the citations of IRENAEUS, and CYPRIAN, as well as by other authorities, that another duty, which was not moſt certainly of moſaical inſtitution, and was plainly a moral obligation ariſing from the real law of nature, had been contained in the original decree. The converts were to abſtain from doing to others what they would not that others ſhould do to

* SELDEN Lib. vii. c. 12.

them.

Digitized by Google

them. This instance, and the former, might be more explained. But enough has been said on these two subjects: and we may proceed to take notice of those instances, wherein things are, and have been, forbid by civil or ecclesiastical laws, which are not only permitted in the fullest manner by the law of nature, but seem much more conformable to it than the institutions opposed to them; and of others, wherein things directly forbidden by the law of nature are, and have been, permitted, or commanded, by civil or ecclesiastical laws, and by both.

XVII.

THAT the human, like every other, species of animals should multiply by the copulation of the two sexes, and be propagated by their care to nurse and breed up their young, is undoubtedly a law of nature. Self-love, the great spring of human actions, prompts to both. But as it is more immediately determined, and more strongly stimulated by instinct, and by nature, to one, than to the other; it became necessary to give this principle, by reason and by art, all the additional strength that could be given by them, or, at least, to let it lose none that it had. For this purpose it was necessary that parents should know certainly their own respective broods, and that, as a woman cannot doubt whether she is the mother of the child she bears, so a man should have all the assurance law can give him that he is

Digitized by Google

is the father of the child he begets; for a likeneſs of features would not amount to a ſufficient aſſurance, though I have read of a country where women were common, and where paternity was aſcertained no other way. Thus matrimony forms families, which could not be formed without it; and families form ſtates, which could not be formed without them. It was this firſt and natural union which preceded, and prepared mankind for, political or civil union: and the bonds of this ſecond union were more effectually ſtrengthened by thoſe of paternal and filial affection, and of conſanguinity, than they could have been by thoſe alone of accidental intereſts liable to vary, and of covenants liable to be broken. On ſuch principles, and for ſuch purpoſes, I preſume that matrimony was inſtituted. They are evidently derived from the law of nature. The inſtitution therefore is conformable to the law of nature, as far as it is ſubſervient to theſe ends. But when it is carried further than theſe ends require, and that which is conſiſtent with them, or even conducive to them, is forbid, it is, in every ſuch reſpect, a mere arbitrary impoſition.

GREAT attention has been had in every well conſtituted government to promote the multiplication of mankind: and this attention muſt be always neceſſary; for if the human race is daily increaſing, it is daily decreaſing likewiſe; and it would be trifling to maintain that celibacy is leſs hurtful, or polygamy leſs neceſſary, than they were formerly,

Digitized by Google

formerly, on CUMBERLAND's vain assumption * that the earth is sufficiently peopled. Men who were advanced in years, and had never been married, were stigmatised at Sparta; and as well there, as at Rome, and in many other places, great immunities, prerogatives, and other encouragements were granted to those, who had a large legitimate issue. The talmudists carry the obligation of getting children so far, that they declare the neglect of it to be a sort of homicide. "Quicunque "Israelita liberis operam non dat, est velut ho"micida †."

Two sorts of polygamy are distinguished by the civilians. That of one man who has several wives, and that of one woman who has several husbands. All the ends of matrimony are answered by the first. It has therefore prevailed always, and it still prevails generally, if not universally, either as a reasonable indulgence to mankind, or as a proper, and in the early ages a necessary, expedient to increase their numbers. Such it is, no doubt; such it must be, in the order of nature: and when we are told that it has not this effect among the people who retain the custom at this day, either the fact, asserted by men who cannot be competent judges of it, may be untrue; or sodomy and abortions, in conjunction with other unnatural causes, may prevent the natural effect of polygamy. The ends of matri-

* Cap. 6. † SELDEN Uxor Ebraica. Lib. i. c. 9.

mony

mony are not answered by the second, which has been, I suppose, a double polygamy, wherever it has been practised; since we cannot believe that the superior sex ever submitted their prerogative to the inferior, and that several men became the property of one woman, although mention be made by STRABO of the Sabeans, among whom one woman was the wife of a whole family. She lay with the eldest all night, and drudged on with the rest all day. Other examples of the same kind might be quoted from modern travellers, who speak of some countries where every woman is married to seven husbands, and of others where the wife may, and the husband may not, call in assistants to the bed: by which custom the prerogative of the antient patriarchs would be reversed in favor of women, and they would have, if I may say so, their male concubines. But, to proceed on the more probable hypothesis: the divine PLATO approved, the Spartan lawgiver instituted, a community of wives; and CAESAR reports that there were in our Britain certain amicable societies of both sexes, wherein every woman was the wife of ten or twelve men, and every man the husband of as many women. The most admired philosophers, the most famous legislators, and several of the least civilised people, Britons and others, admitted the same absurd abuse of matrimony, and destroyed one end at least of it's institution, by making the ascertainment of fathers impossible, as DIODORUS SICULUS * says

* Lib. ii.

that

that of mothers too was made by a nation in India, where the children were changed as ſoon as born.

THE firſt ſort of polygamy, for the ſecond was too contrary to nature and good policy to ſpread wide, or to laſt long, was allowed by the moſaical law, and was authoriſed by God himſelf. There is, indeed, a very looſe reſtraint laid on a king, in the xvii^th^ chapter of Deuteronomy. He is not to multiply wives, leſt his heart ſhould be turned away; neither is he to multiply greatly ſilver and gold. Moderation was preſcribed in both paſſages: but wives and wealth ſuitable to the kingly ſtate were implied in both. The number of one, and the quantity of the other, are not determined. They were left, probably, to the judgment of the king himſelf, for whom the law was made: but the rabbins, who made many arbitrary laws of their own, under pretence of interpreting divine laws, as other rabbins have continued to do, thought fit to limit the number of queens, or of queens and concubines both, to eighteen; the ridiculous reaſons for which ſpecific number may be ſeen in SELDEN's treatiſe, called Uxor Ebraica*. By the ſame authority prieſts were allowed to have but one wife, and all other perſons but four; the reaſon for which number it is more eaſy to imagine, than to expreſs decently.

* Lib. i. c. 8.

THE

The zeal of the Jews to promote the obſervation of the precept to increaſe and multiply, was ſo great, that, beſides the eſtabliſhment and regulation of polygamy, their doctors deſcended into many particulars for the ſame purpoſe, and among the reſt were careful to appoint ſtated periods, beyond which it was not lawful to neglect the performance of conjugal duty in any form of life. The periods were marked even to the artificer, the countryman, and the ſeaman: and the wife had her remedy if the law was not obſerved. The prodigious numbers, of which this nation appears to have conſiſted, from the exode to the deſtruction of their city by Titus Vespasian, and the conſtant reparation of theſe numbers after ſo many maſſacres, captivities, and other deſolations, muſt be aſcribed, as I think, if we believe them to have been real, to that prodigious and conſtant increaſe of people which a well ordered polygamy cauſed.

The writers, who pretend ſometimes that polygamy has not the effect aſcribed to it, employ, at other times, this very increaſe as an argument againſt it. But ſurely the argument, as well as the pretence, is falſe. Increaſe of people muſt be always an advantage, and can never be hurtful to any ſtate, no nor cumberſome to particular families, unleſs the want of order, good policy, and induſtry make it ſo. To talk of a commonwealth ſinking under it's own weight by the increaſe

Digitized by Google

creaſe of people, as PUFFENDORF does in one place*, might have appeared reaſonable to thoſe antient nations of Europe and Aſia, who ſent ſo many colonies abroad for fear of ſtarving at home; and would, I queſtion not, appear ſo at this time to the nations of Africa, who ſell their children not only to procure themſelves brandy and tobacco, or other wares, but to prevent an overſtock of inhabitants. The truth however is, and it may be eaſily demonſtrated, that numbers of people are ſtrength and wealth to every country; and that the law of nature, which directs the increaſe of them, is in this inſtance, what it is in all others, the law of good policy.

THUS therefore the matter ſtands. This ſort of polygamy is quite conformable to the law of nature, and provides the moſt effectual means for the generation and education of children. In the other ſtate, mankind may multiply perhaps as much in the firſt inſtance of begetting, but not in the ſecond of breeding up, for want of an equal aſcertainment of both the parents: and this defect may diſappoint, to a great decree, the intention of nature. Monogamy, on the other hand, or the confinement of one huſband to one wife, whilſt they both live, for I ſhall uſe the word in this ſenſe here, will unite the care of both parents in breeding up ſubjects of the commonwealth; but will not ſerve as effectually, nor in as great

* Lib. vi. c. 1.

Digitized by Google

numbers, to the begetting them. The prohibition of polygamy of the firſt kind is, therefore, not only a prohibition of what nature permits in the fulleſt manner, but of what ſhe requires too in ſome manner, and often in a greater degree than ordinary, for the reparation of ſtates exhauſted by wars, by plagues, and other calamities. The inſtitution of the ſecond ſort contradicts her intention in one part, as the inſtitution of monogamy diminiſhes the effect of her law in another part. The prohibition is abſurd, and the impoſition arbitrary.

THE impoſition is very antient, however, if it be as antient in Greece as CECROPS: and if this kind of matrimony was the moſt perfect, as many aſſert, there would be reaſon to wonder how the moſt perfect kind came to be eſtabliſhed by an uninſpired lawgiver among the nations, whilſt the leaſt perfect kind had been eſtabliſhed by MOSES, the meſſenger and prophet of God, among his choſen people. The Romans took many things from the Greeks, as well as from the Etrurians, at the foundation of their monarchy, altho' PYTHAGORAS was no more the cotemporary of NUMA, than he was the ſcholar of EZECHIEL. But from whomſoever they took the inſtitution of marriage; the matrimonial tables, and the oath which every married man was obliged to take before the cenſors, declared it to be for the procreation of children: and they made laws occaſionally to encourage this procreation.

Digitized by Google

If LYCURGUS, on whoſe principles every child was the child of the commonwealth, deemed it expedient for improving the ſeveral broods, that his citizens ſhould croſs them, by lying with the wives of one another; and if the ephori obliged one of their kings to take a ſecond wife, when he would not part with the firſt, who was barren; the Romans needed to have made no great ſcruple of borrowing wives to increaſe or to mend their race: and CATO is ſaid to have lent his MARCIA to HORTENSIUS. Nay, CAESAR intended to procure a law, which one of the tribunes had orders to propoſe, and by which every one ſhould be authoriſed to take as many wives as he pleaſed, and ſuch as he pleaſed, "liberorum quaerendorum "cauſa." The paſſage may, indeed, have another ſenſe; and if SUETONIUS, from whom it is taken, writ — "uxores — quas et quot vellet," inſtead of "vellent," it muſt mean that CAESAR intended the new prerogative for himſelf alone, as the occaſion that introduces the anecdote, and the circumſtance of directing the law to be propoſed when he ſhould be abſent, "cum ipſe abeſ-"ſet, may incline one to ſuſpect. But, on the other hand, nothing can be more probable than this, that CAESAR conſidered, beſides the conſtant waſte of roman citizens, which the expoſition of infants, and perhaps the ſeverity of paternal power, but certainly their ordinary ſtate of war, occaſioned, the extraordinary loſs of people, which the commonwealth had ſuſtained in his

Digitized by Google

time by proſcriptions and a long courſe of civil war. It is probable that he conſidered this: and it is therefore much more wonderful his ſucceſſor ſhould not think, after another proſcription, and another civil war, of eſtabliſhing polygamy, to repair theſe accumulated loſſes, than that he, the firſt CAESAR, ſhould. This was not done, however: nor was polygamy eſtabliſhed among the Romans before they were chriſtians. It was leſs likely to be ſo afterwards: and if VALENTINIAN married two wives, and gave leave to his ſubjects to do the ſame, by a public edict, as the eccleſiaſtical hiſtorian SOCRATES ſays he did, his example was not followed. We may doubt too, whether that of SOCRATES, the philoſopher I mean, was followed on the ſame occaſion at Athens. DIOGENES LAERTIUS * relates that the Athenians decreed, when their city was depopulated by war and ſickneſs, that every citizen might have, to increaſe the number of children, a ſecond wife, beſides her who was called his town wife, and of which ſort he could have but one †. SOCRATES took the advantage of this decree, which ſet aſide the law of CECROPS: and he deſpiſed, with a great elevation of mind, thoſe who criticiſed his conduct, and threw out reproaches againſt him. This famous miſſionary of natural religion and law declared, by this action, that po-

* Vit. SOCRAT.

† —Uti urbanum quidem unam uxorem cives ducerent, liceret autem et ex altera procreare liberos.

lygamy

Digitized by Google

lygamy was againſt neither, and that the law of CECROPS had forbid what they allowed.

XVIII.

THE reaſons that determined the lawgivers of Greece, and Rome, and of ſome few other ſtates, to forbid a plurality of wives, which was permitted in almoſt all countries, may have been ſuch as theſe. They ſaw that polygamy would create large families, and large families a greater expence than could be borne by men who were reduced to live in cities, and other fixed habitations, where property was diſtinguiſhed, and where no one could afford to ſpend more than his legal poſſeſſions, his labor, and his induſtry, gave him. Monogamy was a ſort of ſumptuary law, and might be thought the more reaſonable, becauſe, even in thoſe countries where polygamy was eſtabliſhed, men were not permitted to marry more women than they were able to maintain.

ANOTHER reaſon, that ſerved to confirm this inſtitution, was the part aſſigned to the prieſts in it. DIONYSIUS HALICAR. * having obſerved how ill women had been uſed to keep their conjugal vow, even in countries where a very ſingular magiſtrate, a magiſtrate to preſerve their chaſtity †, was appointed, ſpeaks with great encomium of a law that ROMULUS made to attach every Roman

* Lib. ii. 24, 25. †---Cui mulierum caſtitas curae eſſet.

Digitized by Google

wife to her husband, by an entire participation of all his possessions and of his religious rites *. These sacred nuptials were celebrated by a solemn sacrifice, and by the eating together of a consecrated barley cake. The natural effect of this law and this religious ceremony was such, that during five hundred and twenty years there was no instance of a divorce at Rome; for so I understand the historian, who does not refer, according to my apprehension, to any express prohibition of divorces, in the case even of these marriages, by the law that established them, as some have imagined. Thus monogamy became, by the intervention of the priesthood, a religious, as well as a civil, institution. I might add, not improperly, nor untruly, that this institution has received at least an indirect support from the vices of husbands and wives, from those very abuses which it was designed by Romulus, and by other legislators, to reform. By entering into single marriages, men satisfied the natural desire of propagating their species, and acquired the means of having a legitimate issue; whilst nothing hindered them, nor their wives neither, except the want of opportunity, from indulging their lust with others, in spight of their sacred bonds, and the legal property they had in one another's persons. We may believe the more easily, that such considerations helped to reconcile pagans to the seeming constraint of single marriages, since we can

* ---Omnium et bonorum et sacrorum---

make

Digitized by Google

make no doubt that they have the ſame effect on chriſtians, who think theſe marriages inſtituted by God himſelf immediately, as many of the former deemed them to be enjoined by the law of nature: for what authority does in one caſe, cuſtom might very well do in the other: and it is much leſs ſtrange that cuſtom, which we call a ſecond nature, ſhould paſs for the firſt and real nature, than that human authority ſhould paſs for divine.

But of all the reaſons, by which we may account for the prevalence of ſingle marriages, in oppoſition to polygamy, divorces conſtituted the principal and the moſt effectual. With them monogamy may be thought a reaſonable inſtitution. Without them it is an abſurd, unnatural, and cruel impoſition. It croſſes the intention of nature doubly, as it ſtands in oppoſition to the moſt effectual means of multiplying the human ſpecies, and as it forbids the ſole expedient, by which this evil can be leſſened in any degree, and the intention of nature can be, in many caſes, at all carried on. Although the firſt mention of divorces be made by Isaiah, and Jeremiah, occaſionally, ſeven or eight hundred years after the law was given, they had been always in uſe among the Iſraelites: and as the right was derived, by their doctors, both from the natural and the moſaical law, ſo they were practiſed under no very ſtrict regulations. I ſay nothing of the forms. The legal cauſes had a great latitude: a

Digitized by Google

divorce was ſufficiently authoriſed when a woman did not find favor in the eyes of her huſband, becauſe of ſome turpitude in her perſon or behaviour, or even becauſe he found another woman whom he thought handſomer, or whom it was more convenient to him to marry *. Thus the people of God had an advantage, in this reſpect, over other people. Plurality of wives might have made divorces leſs neceſſary. The defects in body or mind of one would be compenſated by the perfections of the others; or, if they proved all alike diſagreeable, the huſband had the reſource of concubines. The caſe of the Romans, and all thoſe nations where ſingle marriages were eſtabliſhed, was very different. He who had a barren wife could not fulfil the law of nature, nor ſwear without perjury, as he was obliged to do, that he kept a wife in order to have children by her; and therefore CARVILIUS RUGA † acted very conſcientiouſly when he was the firſt, if he was the firſt, to put away his wife. The law-caſuiſts, who decide that barrenneſs is not a ſufficient cauſe of ſeparation, becauſe it may be the misfortune, but cannot be imputed as the fault, of the woman, might as well decide that no accidental infirmity, which renders a man incapable of performing his office in the ſtate, is a ſufficient reaſon for removing him. The Romans paid no regard to ſuch caſuiſtry. They continued divorces in this,

* Foeditatem perſonalem, negotium impudicum. Si invenerit aliam pulchriorem, aut ſibi commodiorem. SELD. De ux. ebraic. † DION. HAL. ubi ſupra.

and

Digitized by Google

and many other caſes; ſuch, for inſtance, as ill management of family affairs, or an intolerable and incurable ill humor, which were the reaſons, I preſume, of CICERO's divorce from TERENTIA: and good reaſons ſurely, ſince the huſband may be ruined by one, and the peace of his whole life be deſtroyed by the other.

THE inſtitution of divorces was of ſuch abſolute neceſſity where a plurality of wives was forbid, and of ſo much conveniency where this plurality was allowed, that it continued on the ſame foot among the Romans till chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed fully in the empire; and that it continues ſtill among the Jews in the eaſt, if not practiſed, for prudential reaſons, in the ſame manner, and as openly, in the weſt.

SELDEN gives a very particular account, in the third book of his Hebrew wife, of the occaſion on which divorces were reſtrained: and it amounts to this. HILLEL and SAMMAEAS were of that ſet of men, the rabbins, who pretended to have authentic traditions, and certain interpretations of their law, conveyed down to them from MOSES; and who were, notwithſtanding this oral rule of faith, of doctrine, and of manners, frequently in oppoſition, and at the head of different factions in the ſchools of the Jews. Two ſuch factions had been formed, concerning the legal grounds of divorces, by HILLEL, and SAMMAEAS who had been his ſcholar, as GAMALIEL, the maſter of ſaint

Digitized by Google

ſaint PAUL, is ſaid to have been his nephew and his ſucceſſor: and the diſputes ran high between them whilſt CHRIST was on earth. The Hillelians maintained the original right of repudiation, and ſuch as it was practiſed, not only in the caſe of adultery, or turpitude, but in every other caſe, "ob omnimodam rem ſeu cauſam *." The Sammeans inſiſted on a reformation of this cuſtom, and on a new interpretation of the law, founded on a grammatical criticiſm. They confined the right of divorce to the caſe of turpitude alone. CHRIST decided the queſtion in favor of the latter, and ſpecified but one kind of turpitude. This deciſion appeared ſo ſtrange to his diſciples, that they were at a loſs, as well as the Phariſees, to gueſs why then MOSES had eſtabliſhed the right of divorce; for it is probable the notion had not prevailed amongſt them, that God tolerated ſuperſtitious practices, or permitted even crimes to have the ſanction of his law, as in the preſent caſe it is ſaid that he did, becauſe of the hardneſs of heart of their fathers. The diſciples therefore cried out, that, if this was the caſe, it would be better not to marry. The Jews did not ſubmit to this deciſion. The ſame diſpute continued many years; and about ſeventy from the birth of CHRIST it was decided in favor of HILLEL by that oracle from heaven; "the daughter of the "voice ‡," which was heard at Jabne, not far from Jeruſalem, and the place perhaps where the ſanhedrim was then held. But the law of grace

* Ib. l. iii. c. 20. ‡ Filia vocis.

was

Digitized by Google

was ſuperior, in time, to the natural and the moſaical law, among chriſtians. It had a right to be ſo; and, beſides, we may believe very probably, and very piouſly, with JUSTIN the martyr, that JOSEPH, having ſuſpected the holy virgin to have been got with child before her marriage, had entertained thoughts of ſeparating from a wife whom he could not keep according to the laws of his country *. We may believe too, on the foundation of this anecdote, that chriſtians were prepared to underſtand the words of JESUS in a ſenſe the moſt reſtrictive of divorces, and the leaſt favourable to that inſtitution. I ſaid, that the law of grace was ſuperior in time to the other; for as little as we know what the practice of chriſtians was during the firſt three hundred years, we know in general, that great relicts of judaiſm remained long amongſt them; that divorces were in uſe, even thoſe which wives ſignified to their huſbands; that the meaning of the word fornication was extended from the fleſh to the ſpirit; and that this inſtitution was obſerved, admitted, denied, to the time of CONSTANTINE, without any certain rule at all; "aliter atque aliter," ſays SELDEN †. From that time downwards, emperors publiſhed edicts; councils made decrees; fathers, and after them ſchoolmen, advanced opinions; eccleſiaſtical and principally papal power increaſed; a new juriſprudence, the child of uſurpation, of ignorance, and bigotry, grew up under the care of

* Juxta patrios mores ejiciendam. † Ib. c. 28.

the

Digitized by Google

the canoniſts; marriage was declared a ſacrament, and this tie indiſſoluble.

XIX.

BEFORE we leave the ſubject of poſitive laws, eccleſiſtical and civil, that forbid thoſe things arbitrarily, and by mere will, which the laws of nature permit; we may properly enough take notice of ſome reſtrictions relatively to marriages, which have not been ſo hard to impoſe as the obligation of ſingle marriages. Polygamy had been allowed in moſt nations; divorces, I believe, in all. It required time, therefore, to aboliſh inſtitutions, both of which had revelation and reaſon on their ſide, and the laſt of which had been confirmed by univerſal practice. But it required neither time nor pains to continue the prohibition of marriages within certain degrees of conſanguinity and affinity. The Jews, among whom chriſtianity aroſe, held ſuch inceſtuous marriages to be forbidden as much as adultery, ſodomy, and beſtiality. The Greeks, and the Romans, among whom chriſtianity had the greateſt increaſe, and the firmeſt eſtabliſhment, ſeem to have held different opinions, at different periods, about the remoter degrees, but not to have varied about thoſe in the aſcending or deſcending lines; and the Romans, who made one ſtate, were more uniform on this head than the Greeks, who were divided into many, and whoſe country produced many a whimſical philoſopher that affected law-giving, beſides PLATO. The nations among whom no regard

Digitized by Google

regard was paid to these degrees, but brothers mixed with sisters, fathers with their daughters, and sons with their mothers, were held in abomination, like all other nations, by the Jews, who were in return held in contempt by these and all others. These, and all others, were deemed barbarous by the Greeks and the Romans: so that their example might well have, as it had, no effect, in this respect, either on the Jews, the Greeks, or the Romans; tho two of them at least, the Egyptian and Babylonian, had been masters of the former in every sense, and tho the second and the third had received the first principles of all their knowledge, and perhaps the first use of letters, from the same, either immediately like the Greeks, or mediately thro the Greeks, like the Romans.

That the abhorrence of incestuous marriages should prevail among the Jews, is easily accounted for, since they founded it on a positive law of God. But how it came to prevail among the Greeks and the Romans, is not so clear. Was it founded among them on a law, and is it even an instinct of nature? This has been said, but cannot be maintained. They scarce deserve an answer, who would prove these marriages prohibited by the law of nature, on the supposition that there is a repugnancy in nature to any such copulations; as if consanguinity, like fire, produced an agreeable sensation at certain distances, and pain and abhorrence at a nearer approach; as if a multitude of nations, civilised and uncivilised, could have been

Digitized by Google

been determined to act unneceſſarily againſt ſo ſtrong an inſtinct of nature, as this repugnancy or abhorrence is aſſumed to be; and finally, as if the firſt men, who could not increaſe and multiply without committing inceſt, had been commanded to do it by the author of nature, againſt the law of that nature he had juſt before given them.

A GREAT deal of dull pains has been taken to inquire into the nature of ſhame, and to diſcover the motives of that modeſty with which almoſt all mankind, even the moſt ſavage, conceal the parts, and remove out of ſight to perform the act, of generation. How comes this about, ſay ſuch writers, "when the propagation of ſo noble a creature "as man is in itſelf a work of honor and credit *?" The queſtion might be ſufficiently anſwered by ſaying, that the parts, deſtined to this pleaſant and honorable uſe, are deſtined likewiſe to uſes that are offenſive to our ſenſes; and that they ſhew by the neceſſity they are of to our being in one deſtination, and to the propagation of our ſpecies in another, a certain mortifying identity of nature with the vileſt of the animal kind. Theſe parts are placed, as it were, out of the way in the human fabric; and, in conformity to this indication, the cuſtom of hiding them, and of retiring from the ſight of others when we employ them to any purpoſe, has grown up in both ſexes, and been confirmed by education. "Hanc naturae tam di-

* PUF. l. vi. c. 1.

"ligentem

Digitized by Google

"ligentem fabricam imitata eſt hominum verecun-
"dia*." Shame or modeſty, according to TULLY, make us imitate nature in this inſtance: but I think that the latent principle of this ſhame, or modeſty, is a vanity inherent in our nature, derived from an opinion of excellence and dignity. It is this that makes us fond of ſhewing, wherever we can ſhew it, how ſuperior we are to other animals, and to hide, wherever we can hide it, how much we participate of the ſame nature.

OTHER reflections might be added to theſe, ſuch particularly as furniſh reaſons for the ſolitude wherein the two ſexes affect to copulate; among which perhaps an uncontrolled and undiſturbed indulgence to their mutual luſt would not be found the leaſt. But to what purpoſe ſhould this be done, when there is nothing in the aſſumed ſhame, even if we allow it to be natural, that has any more relation to inceſtuous, than to other, marriages? The ſhame of expoſing their ſecret parts, and of copulating in public, was, to be ſure, juſt as ſtrong in thoſe who contracted the firſt, as in thoſe who contracted the ſecond; and it is impoſſible to conceive that it can cauſe any natural abhorrence of one of theſe conjunctions more than of the other, or indeed of either. It remains therefore that this abhorrence is artificial, and that it has been inſpired by human laws, by prejudice, and by habit.

* CIC. Offic. l. i.

BUT

But tho this be evidently true, yet it is true likewise that the degrees spoken of are to be distinguished; for tho the prohibition cannot be deduced, in any of them, from instinct, or animal nature; yet is it favoured by reasonable nature in some. The permission, that her laws give to conjunctions necessary to the propagation of the species of animals, may be conceived to be in the human less and more full, or absolute, according to the received distinction of legal permissions that I have somewhere mentioned. The conjunctions of fathers with their daughters, and of sons with their mothers, if they are thought permitted, must be thought to be so by the lowest sort of natural permission, not only for the reason Socrates gives in Xenophon, the disparity of age, from which he supposed, not weakly, as it has been objected, but wisely, and providentially, that several inconveniences would arise; but for a reason of more importance, and of universal extent. The first societies, and those which composed all others, are family societies. These are natural; and the better they are regulated the more easily and the more surely will political societies, whose component parts they are, be put and maintained under good regulations. Parents are the chief magistrates of families; and every thing that tends to diminish a reverence for them, or to convert it into some other sentiment, diminishes their authority, dissolves the order of those little commonwealths, and introduces a licentiousness of manners, which they carry

Digitized by Google

carry with them and diffuſe in the greater. This now muſt happen in ſome degree wherever the cuſtom prevails, that fathers take their daughters, and ſons their mothers, for wives or miſtreſſes; whenever they do it actually, or may do it lawfully. I need not ſtay to prove and to illuſtrate this; but may conclude, on what has been ſaid, that if natural law does not directly prohibit ſuch conjunctions as theſe, it does not permit them neither in ſo full a manner, as to give them that ſanction, which other marriages, that are reputed to be contrary to the law of nature, and that are called alike inceſtuous, have.

The marriages of brothers and ſiſters, for inſtance, which ſtand in the very next degree, may be objected to, as they may be defended, by probable arguments drawn from political conſiderations: but no color of an argument can be drawn againſt them from the conſtitution of nature, in which all her laws are contained, and by which they are all promulgated. It may be ſaid, and I find that ſomething of this kind has been ſaid, that, the intention of reaſonable nature being not only to ſtrengthen the bonds of ſociety as much, but to improve ſociability among men, and to extend it as wide, as poſſible, in oppoſition to that inſociability which is ſo apt to grow up between diſtinct families and ſtates; thoſe poſitive laws, which forbid marriages in near degrees of conſanguinity and affinity, are conformable to nature, and drawn by neceſſary conſequences from her laws. For this

Digitized by Google

reaſon, it may be ſaid that ſuch marriages were forbidden among ſeveral of the moſt civiliſed nations in the pagan world, and that we find ſo many prohibitions in caſes of affinity, as well as of conſanguinity, in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus. The more remote degrees were prohibited perhaps to fence in, and to ſecure the better an obſervation of the neareſt: and this might be the more neceſſary becauſe of the precedent practice of mankind, who had been conſtituted by God, at the creation, in a neceſſity of committing what was now forbidden, ſince they could not otherwiſe have obeyed his firſt and great precept, to increaſe and multiply. EVE was in ſome ſort the daughter of ADAM. She was literally bone of his bone, and fleſh of his fleſh, by birth, if I may call it ſo; whereas other huſbands and wives are ſo in an allegorical manner only. But, to paſs this over, the children of the firſt couple were certainly brothers and ſiſters: and by theſe conjunctions, declared afterwards inceſtuous, the human ſpecies was firſt propagated. If you accept rabbinical authority, you may believe that EVE brought forth conſtantly twins, a male and a female, as pigeons, I think, are ſaid to do: ſo that CAIN might marry the twin ſiſter of ABEL, and ABEL the twin ſiſter of CAIN. Whether this inſtitution alters, and ſoftens, the caſe any more, than that of the Lacedemonians, who were permitted to marry their ſiſters on the mother's ſide, but not on the father's; or than that of the Athenians, who might by law, or who did by cuſtom, marry their ſiſters on the father's ſide, but not on the

Digitized by Google

the mother's, as, we find by the example of ABRAHAM and SARAH, it was reputed lawful to do in the days of the patriarchs, let the great caſuiſts of law and goſpel decide. It may be ſaid, on the other hand, that, if it be agreeable to the law of nature and of right reaſon, in many caſes, to extend the bonds of ſociety by a prohibition of marriages between perſons too near a-kin, it is in many caſes at leaſt as agreeable to this law, to preſerve poſſeſſions and wealth in the families to which they belong, and not to ſuffer them to be carried by any female caprice into others. Precautions to this effect have been taken by wiſe legiſlators; and that which MOSES took is remarkable in all its circumſtances. He had made a law, on the application of the daughters of ZELOPHEHAD, whoſe cauſe he is ſaid to have brought before the Lord; * by which, if a man died and had no ſon, his inheritance was to paſs unto his daughter. But when the chief fathers of the families of the ſons of JOSEPH came before MOSES and the elders of Iſrael †, to complain of this law, the precaution we ſpeak of here was immediately added, and the law amended. MOSES declared in the name of God, that every daughter, who poſſeſſed an inheritance by virtue of the former law, ſhould be obliged to marry one of the family of the tribe of her father, and no other: and the reaſon is annexed, "that the children of Iſrael may enjoy every "man the inheritance of his fathers.". In obe-

* Num. c. xxvii. † Ibid. c. xxxvi.

Digitized by Google

dience to this law, the daughters of ZELOPHEHAD "were married unto their father's brother's ſons."

IT is evident on the whole, that marriages, within certain degrees of conſanguinity and affinity, are forbid by political inſtitutions, and for political reaſons; but are left indifferent by the law of nature, which determines nothing expreſly about them. The laws of nature are general; and in this caſe, as in all others, the particular application of them, and the means of ſecuring their effect, are left to human prudence. "Increaſe "and multiply" is the law of nature. The manner in which this precept ſhall be executed with greateſt advantage to ſociety, is the law of man. When the latter promotes the execution of the former, without breaking any other general law of nature, it is conformable to this law. This may be done, and has been done, by different inſtitutions of marriage. Which of theſe is the moſt effectual relatively to the precept of increaſing and multiplying, and at the ſame time conſiſtent with the whole tenor of natural law, reaſon and experience muſt decide. In the mean time, we may venture to aſſert that the moſt effectual to this purpoſe, under this condition, which ever it be, is the moſt conformable to nature, tho it be not a law of nature. To marry among our kindred, or to marry ſtrangers, is equally effectual to the propagation of the ſpecies, altho polygamy and monogamy may not be ſo: and therefore, ſince there are political reaſons for and againſt the marriages

Digitized by Google

riages referred to, the prohibition of either is merely arbitrary. It may be expedient on ſome occaſions; but howſoever the prohibition turns, it is a law of will that forbids what the law of nature permits. As occaſions are various, circumſtances different, and will above all uncertain, ſo have theſe reſtraints on marriage been very inconſiſtently laid. In ſome places, or times, it was unlawful to marry a ſiſter by the father's, and in others by the mother's ſide; or it was lawful to marry a couſin german, and not an aunt, as among the Jews by their moſaical law. But the moſt ridiculous of all theſe inconſiſtencies is to be found in that great repertory of inconſiſtencies and abſurdities, the rabbinical ſyſtem of religion and law. When a gentile became a "proſelyte of "juſtice *," he became, according to this ſyſtem, a new man, and loſt all his former relations by this regeneration. He could not be affected, therefore, by the law that forbid the marriage of a mother, a daughter, or a ſiſter, for he had none; and yet the prohibition was extended to him by the blundering caſuiſtry of the rabbins, as it may ſeem, even when theſe relations were doubly diſſolved, and the mother, the daughter, or the ſiſter, was a proſelyte of juſtice, as well as himſelf.

XX.

AFTER ſaying thus much of eccleſiaſtical and civil laws, that forbid what the laws of nature permit, ſomething muſt be ſaid of thoſe

* Selp. De jure, &c. Lib. v.

Digitized by Google

which permit, or enjoin, what the laws of nature forbid, ſuch things as are in direct oppoſition not only to reaſonable nature, but to phyſical inſtinct. Sodomy was permitted among ſeveral nations, and if we dare not ſay that the moral SOCRATES practiſed it, we may ſay that the divine PLATO recommended it, in ſome of his juvenile verſes at leaſt: and yet ſodomy is very inconſiſtent with the intention of nature, which can be carried on by the conjunction of the two ſexes only. Of beſtiality I ſay nothing, becauſe I do not remember any proof that it was uſed by any people except the Iſraelites, who muſt have been very prone to this unnatural crime, ſince ſo great ſeverity of law was neceſſary to reſtrain them from it. Caſtration and celibacy may be cited on this occaſion. They are both contradictions to the law of nature; the firſt wantonly permitted, the ſecond deceitfully and ambitiouſly commanded. The firſt makes obedience to the law impracticable for two the moſt ſilly purpoſes imaginable, to provide guards for the ſeraglios of the eaſt, and ſingers for the theatres of the weſt. The ſecond came into faſhion early in the chriſtian church, to ſpeak of no other, under the pretence of greater purity; and was pleaded for, and practiſed by, orthodox enthuſiaſts, as well as by heretics. But when the church, with the biſhop of Rome at the head of it, made a bold and ſucceſsful puſh to be every where ſuperior to the ſtate, the celibacy of prieſts became a coercive law. GREGORY the ſeventh made the whole clergy ſubmit to it, and the council of Trent maintained it

Digitized by Google

it ſtrenuouſly for the ſame reaſon of eccleſiaſtical ambition, that the religious ſociety might be every where more independent on the civil, and leſs attached, by the ties of nature, as well as of law, to the ſtate.

THERE are other examples of the ſame kind, which cannot be brought without the utmoſt horror; becauſe in them it is ſuppoſed impiouſly, againſt principles as ſelf-evident as any of thoſe neceſſary truths which are ſuch of all knowledge, that the Supreme Being commands by one law what he forbids by another. The zealots among the Jews aſſumed a right to aſſaſſinate any Jew, or any other man, who ſhould ſeem to them to violate by public and ſtrong appearances, "ſpe- "ciebus aliquot facti atrocioribus *," the ſanctity of the Divinity, of the temple, or of the nation †. Thus MATTATHIAS, in the fury of his holy zeal, ruſhed on the Jew who was about to ſacrifice in obedience to the edict of ANTIOCHUS ‡, and on the officer appointed to take care of the execution of the edict, and murdered them both. In this caſe the appearances were not equivocal, moſt certainly. In many they might be ſo, and were ſo moſt probably very often, as in that for inſtance of a prieſt who was ſuppoſed to perform his office without a due purification ‖, and who might be dragged out of the temple on this preſumption by

* SELD. De jure, &c. l. iv. c. 4.
† Sanctitatem ſive numinis, ſive templi, ſive gentis. Ibid.
‡ Maccab. JOSEPH. ‖ .... in immunditie ſua.

the young prieſts; too young to be employed in any other ſacerdotal function, but to whom it was lawful to daſh out his brains with their clubs. In all caſes it was againſt the very eſſence, as well as forms, of juſtice, to truſt in any hands a power which none but enthuſiaſts would exerciſe. This ſtrange power, however, was founded on their traditional or oral law; and the example of PHINEAS, who murdered ZIMRI and COZBI in the act of fornication *, and the approbation which God is ſaid to have given to this action, were brought to authoriſe the zealots in a practice, which produced ſuch ſcenes of horror among the Jews, even whilſt they were beſieged by a common enemy, as no other nation ever exhibited: ſuch ſcenes as lions and tigers, provoked by hunger, and let looſe together, would hardly have afforded.

IF we take for granted all that we find related, and as it ſtands related, in the books of the Old Teſtament; we muſt believe that the all-perfect Being approved, and commanded on many particular occaſions, the moſt abominable violations of the general laws of nature, which were his own at leaſt as certainly, as any of thoſe that could be given by immediate revelation, and more certainly than any of thoſe which were aſſumed on the authority of MOSES, or on any authority afterwards to be ſo given. Now this we cannot believe as theiſts; nor are we, I think, under any obligation of believing it as Jews, and much leſs as Chriſtians,

* Num. c. xxv.

As

As theiſts we cannot believe the all-perfect Being liable to one of the greateſt of human imperfections, liable to contradict himſelf. Nothing is more conformable to our idea of ſuch a Being, than to believe that human reaſon cannot account for the proceedings of infinite wiſdom in a multitude of inſtances, in many of thoſe perhaps which ſeem the moſt obvious to it. But nothing is, at the ſame time, more inconſiſtent with this idea, than to believe that this Being perplexes his laws with apparent contradictions, or deviates from them, like human legiſlators, in the particular applications of them; and that God, who never acts againſt the perfections of his own nature, commands his creatures to act upon any occaſion againſt the perfection of theirs. If we try the whole ſyſtem of the religion and policy of the Jews by this rule, I apprehend that all the ſophiſm which has been, or can be employed, with the help of begging the queſtion throughout, will not be ſufficient to acquit this ſyſtem, in many caſes, at the tribunal of informed and unprejudiced reaſon. The theiſt, as a theiſt, can never admit that laws, which are inconſiſtent with that reaſon, and proceſs of reaſoning, by which he diſcovers, and can alone diſcover, the exiſtence and the will, relatively to man, of an all-perfect Being, were given at any time, or to any people, by this Being. He will never give up one for the ſake of the other; nor renounce demonſtration in the higheſt degree for probability in the higheſt, and much leſs in the loweſt. All ſuch laws, therefore, as are manifeſt

feſt violation of the laws of his nature, will be aſcribed by him to man, not to God.

A LARGE field of particulars opens itſelf. Let us confine ourſelves to that on which we have touched already. One law of nature forbids murder, as well as one law of the decalogue. Another allows it as far as it is neceſſary to ſelf-defence, and to the preſervation of ſociety, that is, to the maintenance of the whole ſyſtem of natural law. It will not be pretended, I ſuppoſe, that theſe two laws contradict one another. They coincide in the ſame plan. The general and the particular law tend to the ſame purpoſe; they ſhew the wiſdom of the legiſlator by their conſiſtency, and his goodneſs by their univerſality. It cannot be pretended with any appearance of truth, I am ſure, that the ſame may be ſaid of the moſaical laws about murder. The whole ſyſtem of the law of MOSES, like the whole ſyſtem of his conduct, was founded on murder: and the exceptions which he made, by particular laws in favor of it, to the general law againſt it, were ſo numerous, as to make this in great meaſure vain; which may be thought, without abſurdity, not to be one mark of his divine legation. The thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy might find it's place here; and many ſingular reflections might be made concerning the precautions taken againſt falſe prophets, whoſe ſeductions could be of little force in oppoſition to a true prophet; and againſt dreamers of dreams, that could have little force in oppoſition

to

to daily and almoſt hourly miracles, wrought in the ſight of all Iſrael. Others might be made on certain precepts, from which I will ſuppoſe, candidly, that the inquiſition eſtabliſhed in your church has copied the inſtructions ſhe gives to her familiars; and others again on a ſpirit of cruelty, that involves the innocent with the guilty, ſpares neither man, woman, nor beaſt, neither the brother, the ſon, the daughter, the wife, nor the friend; but makes of the whole chapter ſuch an edict, as could not be imputed to ATTILA, without doing injuſtice to the uncircumciſed, as well as unchriſtian, king of the Huns. Such obſervations, I ſay, might be made, and be puſhed to conviction; to inward conviction I mean: for there are thoſe that will not own it when they feel it, but have recourſe rather to trifling diſtinctions and dogmatical affirmation, the laſt entrenchments of obſtinacy. In theſe let us leave them. Let it avail as much, as it can avail, to ſay that the laws referred to, and written in blood, like thoſe of DRACO, were given to the Iſraelites alone; that the Iſraelites were God's people excluſively of all others; that he was their king by a particular covenant, as well as their God; that idolatry was in every Iſraelite a breach of this covenant, an act of high treaſon, a political crime, and fit to be puniſhed as ſuch; in a word, that on all theſe accounts God might give them ſuch laws in the former relation, as he could not have given to them, nor to any other people, in the latter alone, without contradicting, and obliging thoſe who obeyed

obeyed them to contradict, the general law of nature, whereof he was the author, and by which the punishment of individuals in terrorem, according to their several degrees of guilt, not the undistinguishing extermination of collective bodies, and especially for matters of opinion, is allowed. I have met with arguments of this sort employed to justify the mosaical law. They will not be admitted by some, perhaps, because MOSES made use of the same cruel and undiscerning jurisprudence, on account of their idolatry, against the Canaanites, who had no such covenant with God, nor were the subjects of such a theocracy; who were obnoxious to divine vengeance in no other respect, than that which was common to them and all the heathen nations; and who had provoked the Israelites by no other injury than that of self-defence: that these laws were therefore in the mouth of MOSES, and in the understanding of all the people, the laws of God as God, and not merely as king. But whatever be determined, the example is to my purpose. He who can persuade himself that God, as king of a particular people, whom, as God, he had separated from the rest of mankind, gave these laws to the Israelites, must still confess that these laws are repugnant to those of nature; which will leave the difficulty much where he found it. He, who, instead of resting on this distinction, confounds the king and the God together, as MOSES and the Israelites certainly did, is reduced to the necessity of owning, what no sincere and consistent

theist

Digitized by Google

theiſt can own, that the Supreme Being contradicted his own laws in this inſtance. A ſincere and conſiſtent theiſt, then, muſt look on the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy as an example of human laws that command what the laws of nature forbid.

THAT neither the Jew, nor the Chriſtian, is under any obligation to look on it otherwiſe, may be collected from hence. The Sadduces rejected the whole oral law, and all the traditions of the Phariſees: they rejected too, moſt probably, the whole written law, except the five books aſcribed to MOSES, tho' this has been controverted: they denied the immortality of the ſoul, the reſurrection of the dead, and a ſtate of future rewards and puniſhments, which they eſteemed to be doctrines invented or adopted by the Phariſees, and which we may believe, on very good grounds, to have been introduced into the jewiſh church at different times, as well as from different churches, wherein we know that they were taught, ſince there are no evident traces of theſe, but rather of the contrary, opinions in the moſaical ſyſtem of religion. The Sadducees, therefore, oppoſed on all theſe points, not only the Phariſees firſt, but the doctrine of CHRIST, to whom few of them were converted, afterwards. The Sadducees, however, continued members of the jewiſh church, and ſacrificed at Jeruſalem, whilſt the Samaritans were driven out, or drove themſelves out, and ſacrificed on the mountain of Gerizaim: neither do

Digitized by Google

do we find that the former were ſo obnoxious to the cenſure of CHRIST, as the Phariſees. But the Phariſees were ſtill the orthodox, that is, the ſect in faſhion: and how much they multiplied the obſervances of the law by their traditions, and varied the ſenſe of it by their interpretations of it, is enough known in general by every one. Now it ſeems very plain that a Jew, whether Sadducee or Phariſee, might have ſoftened by different methods, agreeably to the principles of his ſect, the abominable violations of the natural, by the moſaical law. This too, one may believe, would have been done, if the cruel ſpirit of their law had not made them a nation of enthuſiaſts; and if long habits had not made the ſpilling of blood more familiar to them, than to moſt other people. The Sadducees were famous for their ſtrict attachment to the rules of juſtice: and ſome are of opinion that they took their name from an hebrew word, ſignifying juſtice, rather than from SADOC the diſciple of ANTIGONUS SOCHAEUS. Surely then a Jew, in the character of a Sadducee, might reject out of the pentateuch, with a due regard to natural juſtice, thoſe unnatural, unjuſt, and bloody inſtitutions, as reaſonably, and as reconcileably with his judaiſm, as he rejected the whole oral law in oppoſition to the Phariſees, and all the other books of their ſcriptures in conformity to the Samaritans. A Jew, in the character of a Phariſee, might have reconciled, with ſtill greater eaſe, the law of MOSES to the law of nature, that is, the aſſumed law of God to the real. A third

Digitized by Google

third law, the oral, might have brought this about; and this would have been the very beſt uſe to which it was ever put. When I ſay this might have been done with ſtill greater eaſe by interpretation, than by retrenchment, I do not ſpeak without ſufficient grounds: ſince I may undertake to ſhew, from SELDEN, BASNAGE, and other authors, who deal in the Talmud, and in talmudical writings of rabbins, which they render intelligible even to me, that it would coſt leſs improbability of tradition, and leſs ſubtilty of ſophiſm in commenting, than many other opinions did, which theſe men had the credit to eſtabliſh. The latitude of interpretation according to various ſenſes, and the authority of a cabala, were certain expedients by which the imputation might have been taken from the Supreme Being, or the ſeverity and injuſtice have been ſoftened and excuſed in MOSES. Nothing of this kind having been done, I conclude once more, that this chapter of Deuteronomy ſtands, and muſt ſtand, an example of human laws, that command what the laws of nature forbid.

LITTLE more conſideration will be neceſſary to diſcover that a Chriſtian, who profeſſes a religion promulgated by God himſelf, and in every point conformable to the law of nature, is obliged to deny any precept, which is repugnant to this law, to come from God, let it come on what authority, or be aſſumed on what pretence ſoever. The proceedings of providence are repreſented, on one occaſion particularly,

Digitized by Google

ticularly, by St. PAUL, to be merely arbitrary: and the presumption of those who should enquire into the reason of them, is very prudently reproved before hand. How just the representation, or the reproof is, may be questioned, as the first of them has been, and as they both may be, the more reasonably, because these proceedings relate to God's dealings with men; for the justice of which we are told by divines that he appeals even to men. But this apostle himself does not, I think, prescribe any thing directly opposite to the law of nature, as the command of God to man; though his writings abound with mysterious refinements that savour strongly of the pharisaical school, and with the mirabilia and inopinata of the Portic, a school not unknown to the former.

IN all cases, and however this may be, the gospel of CHRIST is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity. He could have called for fire down from heaven, or for an army of destroying angels, to terrify those who did not believe, or to exterminate such as fell from the faith. But he breathed quite another spirit; and his instructions to his apostles went no further, than to preach, to exhort, to reprove; and, where they could not prevail to have their doctrine received, to shake off the dust of their feet. In cases of the most enormous crimes, and even of apostasy, the apostles exercised no other power than that of separating such sinners from the communion of the

Digitized by Google

the faithful. If it ſhould be urged that they could exerciſe no other, becauſe they were not chief magiſtrates, nor legiſlators in any civil ſociety, as MOSES was, and therefore that no argument ought to be drawn from what they did not do, to condemn what MOSES did and commanded; it would be urged in vain. They healed the lame, they cured the blind, and even raiſed the dead, to prove their miſſion. MOSES proved his miſſion by miracles likewiſe. But the miracles wrought by them, in the mild and beneficent ſpirit of chriſtianity, tended to the good of mankind; whereas the miracles he wrought, in the fierce and cruel ſpirit of judaiſm, tended to the deſtruction of mankind. In this caſe, therefore, the difference was great; but in the other, in that of keeping the Jews attached to their religion, and the Chriſtians to theirs, the difference was total. MOSES exerciſed, and commanded the exerciſe of, a political power, the moſt tyrannical, the moſt contrary to the laws of nature, and the moſt irreconcileable to every ſentiment of humanity, for this purpoſe. The apoſtles, who might have exerciſed, for the ſame purpoſe, a divine, and a much greater, power, exerciſed no other than that which has been mentioned, which was not cruel, moſt certainly, and can be ſcarce called coercive, in the courſe of their miniſtry, how much occaſion ſoever hereſy, apoſtaſy, and other flagrant crimes, in the churches they had planted, gave them for it. ELYMAS, indeed, was ſtruck blind by ST. PAUL; and ANANIAS and SAPPHIRA fell dead at

Digitized by Google

the feet of St. PETER. But theſe were particular and extraordinary interpoſitions of providence. CHRIST gave no inſtruction for the exerciſe of ſuch judgments in any caſe. He had reproved this kind of ſpirit in his diſciples, when he was among them: and as long as his ſpirit remained in his church, the moſaical ſpirit, as oppoſite to his law, as to the law of nature, could not ariſe. When they, who called themſelves the ſucceſſors of his apoſtles, hearkened to the ſuggeſtions of their paſſions, and called them zeal; that is, when political, rather than religious, motives guided them; they imitated MOSES, outdo him they could not: and, beſides perſecuting to convert, they not only promoted the utmoſt ſeverity of puniſhment againſt thoſe who fell back into idolatry or judaiſm, or who embraced any hereſy; but, like MOSES, they pretended to do all this by the command of God: ſo that the church of CHRIST imitated, in this inſtance, as it did in many more when it was fallen into corruption, and not before, ſuch inſtitutions as the church and ſtate of the Jews adopted in the primitive purity, ſuch as that purity was, of their original eſtabliſhment.

UPON the whole matter, a chriſtian, who takes his religion from the goſpel, and not from ſyſtems of theology, far from being under any obligation of believing, is under the ſtrongeſt of rejecting, every law, whether perpetual or occaſional, whether given to the Jews alone or to them and to others, that is evidently repugnant to the law of nature

nature and of right reaſon, to the precepts of the goſpel, to the example of CHRIST, to the practice of his firſt diſciples, and to the genuine ſpirit of the religion they taught. If this was the ſpirit of God in the days of CHRIST, it was the ſpirit of God in the days of MOSES: and whatever difference there might be in the ſeveral diſpenſations, and the objects of them, God could have effected his purpoſes without contradicting his ſpirit. We may believe any thing ſooner than this, that immutability admits of change; and yet we muſt admit both the contradiction and the change, if we give entire credit to all that we find related, and as it ſtands related, in the books of the Old Teſtament.

XXI.

I HAVE quoted from father SIMON, in one of my Letters * to my lord CORNBURY, a divine of the faculty of Paris, who held that the authenticity of theſe books, and divine inſpiration of their authors, ſhould be underſtood to extend no further than to matters purely of doctrine, or to ſuch as have a neceſſary connection with theſe. Upon the ſame, and even a ſtronger, principle of reaſon, we may aſſert that as the ſacred writers have no claim to inſpiration when they write on other ſubjects, ſo neither have they when they write any thing on theſe which is evidently inconſiſtent with right reaſon, in matters that are proper objects of reaſon, and with the firſt principles

* Let. III.

Digitized by Google

of natural law, which are at the ſame time the firſt principles of chriſtianity. What the french divine advanced, and what I have advanced here, will be treated as an impious paradox by ſome of thoſe trifling ſolemn dogmatiſts in criticiſm and theology, who have advanced ſo many abſurd and impious, really impious, paradoxes of their own. But let us ſee, in the preſent caſe, on whoſe ſide the paradox and the impiety lie. I ſay that the law of nature is the law of God. Of this I have the ſame demonſtrative knowledge, that I have of the exiſtence of God, the all-perfect Being. I ſay that the all-perfect Being cannot contradict himſelf; that he would contradict himſelf if the laws contained in the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, to mention no others here, were his laws, ſince they contradict thoſe of nature; and therefore that they are not his laws. Of all this I have as certain, as intuitive, knowledge, as I have that two and two are equal to four, or that the whole is bigger than a part. From theſe indiſputable premiſes I conclude that all thoſe expreſſions in the text, which aſcribe theſe laws to God, are uninſpired, perhaps interpolated, but undoubtedly falſe. What now does the dogmatiſt do? He begs the queſtion, and he pretends to demonſtrate. His premiſes are precarious, and his concluſion is a paradox. He imputes, directly, to the author of nature, what he is forced to own unjuſt and cruel according to the laws of nature; and he pretends to juſtify the all-perfect Being, whom he has thus accuſed, by inconcluſive and ſophiſtical arguments.

I HAVE

Digitized by Google

I HAVE touched this point above: but ſince I recollect that Mr. LOCKE has inſiſted on a ſolution of the difficulty, which I think, and am not afraid to call, inconcluſive and ſophiſtical, it is worth my while to beſtow a few more words upon it. There is a reſpect due even to the miſtakes of that great man, the reſpect I mean of giving a reaſon for not ſubmitting to his authority, which I would not pay to every dull commentator, nor frothy declaimer, that ſhould argue like him, or from him. We know, from ſome of his writings, how eaſily he received every hypotheſis that favored, or that ſeemed to favor, the authenticity of the jewiſh ſcriptures, notwithſtanding all he ſaid in his chapter of probability; and Mr. COSTE, the tranſlator of his famous Eſſay, who knew him well, accounted for this, and ſome other contradictions, by a ſtrange timidity of temper, which made him often waver in his own abſtract philoſophical notions, when he came to apply them to any of his religious prejudices. He believed, on very inſufficient authority, that the one true God was known to the Jews alone, and that the reſt of mankind were polytheiſts and idolaters from the beginning. Thus he might receive too ſome other theological aſſumptions; this, for inſtance, as preſumptuous and impertinent as it is, to aſſign the ſufficient reaſon that infinite wiſdom had for doing in one manner what infinite power might have done in ſeveral, "that it was neceſſary God "ſhould ſeparate a choſen people from the reſt

" of mankind, in order to preſerve among man-
" kind the knowledge of himſelf in his unity :"
or this, that " the choice fell on the Iſraelites not
" for their own merit," ſince no nation upon earth could have leſs towards God or man, but, " for the merit of their forefathers," of ABRAHAM famous in the eaſt, the patriarch of the Arabians as well as of the Jews, of ISAAC his ſon, and of JACOB his grandſon, of whom it is ſaid in the ſcriptures that they were preferred in the womb to ISMAEL and to ESAU, without aſſigning any apparent reaſon for this preference, ſince they could have no perſonal merit ſo early; and the reaſon of which muſt have been therefore this, that the Iſraelites were to deſcend from them; which looks as if the fathers were choſen for the ſake of the ſons, rather than the ſons for the ſake of the fathers. Mr. LOCKE, who could embrace ſuch hypotheſes as theſe, might eaſily aſſume, as he did aſſume, that " in order to keep up this ſepara-
" tion, and to ſecure the effects of it, the Su-
" preme Being ſubmitted to be not only the tute-
" lary deity of this people, as he had been of
" their fathers, and to make a covenant with
" them, but to be their local deity, and even
" literally as much their king as their God."

THAT he was ſuch a king Mr. LOCKE aſſerted: and on that aſſertion he diſtinguiſhed between the moſaical, and all other laws, in his Letter concerning Toleration. By the former, idolaters were to be rooted out, he ſays: but the former

Digitized by Google

former is not obligatory on Chriſtians, and therefore urged by intolerants very abſurdly in favor of perſecution. The jewiſh commonwealth, different from all others, was an abſolute theocracy; no difference could be made between that commonwealth and the church; religious laws were the civil laws of that people, and part of their political government, in which God himſelf was the legiſlator. The citizens, therefore, of that commonwealth, who apoſtatiſed, were proceeded againſt as traitors and rebels, guilty of no leſs than high treaſon. Let it be ſo. The objections of injuſtice and cruelty to theſe laws will remain in their full force, and be of more weight to prove them human, than all theſe hypotheſes to prove them divine. God was king, and idolatry was no leſs than high treaſon; no objection therefore can lie againſt the puniſhment of it. None certainly: but every objection to the manner, and degree, in which this puniſhment was to be inflicted, ſtands good; for if we can believe God to have been a king, we can never believe him to have been ſuch a king as he is deſcribed, nor to have given ſuch laws as Moses gave in his name. Is it not enough to reduce, in our notions, the Supreme Being to the ſtate of an earthly monarch, unleſs we degrade the all-perfect Being, in them, to the character of an unjuſt and cruel tyrant, who authoriſed, and even commanded, his miniſters expreſly to puniſh without meaſure, without diſcernment, and without forms of juſtice? Can it be obligatory on a Chriſtian to believe this,

Digitized by Google

which Mr. Locke believed? Surely not; no more than to believe that it is obligatory on him at this day to puniſh heretics by virtue of theſe laws: which opinion Mr. Locke diſclaimed, and againſt which he wrote this very treatiſe.

I need not take notice of the indulgence, which, Mr. Locke obſerves, to the honour of the moſaical law, was ſhewn by it to ſtrangers. The obſervation is not ſtrictly within my ſubject; for I never affirmed that all the laws of Moses were repugnant to the law of nature. But what was this indulgence? Strangers were not compelled by force, and on pain of death, to embrace judaiſm, nor were the Iſraelites commanded to exterminate the Moabites, and other foreign nations, unleſs they renounced their idolatry. The taſk might have been too hard for the choſen people: and they did not want, at that time, any more land than that of the ſeven nations. If they had wanted more, they would have ſoon had a law to take it, and to exterminate the rightful poſſeſſors, as they had a promiſe, and a law which authoriſed them to conquer and deſtroy the Canaanites. Mr. Locke, indeed, adds another reaſon for this deſtruction. God had choſen Canaan for his kingdom, as well as the Iſraelites for his ſubjects, and he could not ſuffer the adoration of any other deity in his kingdom: though, in fact, other deities continued to be adored there, with or without the conſent of his people. More reflections on the manner of ſtating facts, as well as of

Digitized by Google

of arguing, may be made; but these are more than enough to shew, in one instance more, and by the way, into how low a form the greatest writers fall, when they attempt to reconcile to common sense, or common honesty, many passages of traditions inconsistent with both. The Jews, or the penmen of these traditions, had so little of either, that they represent sometimes a patriarch like JACOB, and sometimes a saint like DAVID, by characters that can belong to none but the very worst of men. Can we be surprised, then, that they ascribed to the all-perfect Being, on various occasions, such a conduct, and such laws, as are inconsistent with his most obvious perfections? Can we believe such a conduct, and such laws, to have been his, on the word of the proudest and the most lying nation of the world?

MANY other considerations, some of which have been occasionally mentioned, in what I have writ to you, might have their place here. But I shall confine myself to one, which I do not remember to have seen, nor heard urged on one side, nor anticipated on the other. To shew, then, the more evidently how absurd, as well as impious, it is to ascribe these mosaical laws to God, let it be considered that neither the people of Israel, nor their legislator perhaps, knew any thing of another life, wherein the crimes committed in this life are to be punished; although he might have learned this doctrine, which was not so much a secret doctrine as it may be presumed that the unity

Digitized by Google

unity of the ſupreme God was, among the Egyptians. Whether he had learned both, or either, or neither of them, in thoſe ſchools, cannot be determined; but this may be advanced with aſſurance: if MOSES knew that crimes, and therefore idolatry, one of the greateſt, were to be puniſhed in another life, he deceived the people in the covenant they made by his intervention with God. If he did not know it, I ſay it with horror, the conſequence, according to the hypotheſis I oppoſe, muſt be, that God deceived both him and them. In either caſe, a covenant or bargain was made, wherein the conditions of obedience and diſobedience were not fully, nor by conſequence fairly, ſtated. The Iſraelites had better things to hope, and worſe to fear, than thoſe that were expreſſed in it: and their whole hiſtory ſeems to ſhew how much need they had of theſe additional motives, to reſtrain them from polytheiſm and idolatry, and to anſwer the aſſumed purpoſes of divine providence.

XXII.

THE rough draughts, that have been thrown upon theſe papers, may help to ſhew that there is ſuch a thing as the law of nature, antecedent to all other laws, and to the eſtabliſhment of civil ſociety: that this law is the law of reaſon collected a poſteriori from the actual conſtitution of things, by experience and obſervation: that as inſtinct, affections, paſſions, and ſelf-love, that

Digitized by Google

that univerſal ſpring of the animal kind, are given to put us into action, ſo this law is given to guide and govern the human conduct: that, if this law did univerſally and conſtantly guide and govern it, mankind would reach the perfection of their nature, and be as happy as they are by this made capable of being; but that the culture of their reaſon, the improvement of their knowledge, and every thing that tends to the perfection of their nature, and the completion of their happineſs, being left to their induſtry, and ſubjected to the accidents and viciſſitudes of human affairs, ſome few remain in ignorance, many more fall into error, and the irrational prevails over the rational nature, in different degrees, in all of them: that the ſtate of mankind is imperfect in proportion as the uſe that they make of their reaſon is ſo: that the will of God ſignified by the law of nature, and revealed in his works, a revelation that admits of no doubt, ſhews the road to human happineſs to all mankind: that they are ſeduced out of it by falſe appearances, and that law, cuſtom, and even religion, which ſhould have kept them in it, confirm theſe appearances, and only ſerve to keep them out of it.

If it be difficult to ſhew the particular reaſons that have contributed, in an immenſe variety of inſtances, to render the laws and cuſtoms of mankind ſo oppoſite to one another as they are, and ſo oppoſite, or ſo little conformable, to the law of nature and of right reaſon, which ſhould have been the

Digitized by Google

the model, and muſt be made the criterion, of them all, it is eaſy enough to diſcover what has rendered the religions, that have ariſen in the world, from the firſt ages of it, ſo oppoſite in many particular modes, ſo ſimilar in many general principles, and all of them together ſo little conformable to natural religion.

THESE religions, inſtituted by human, under the maſk of divine, authority, though they might be intended to reſtrain and reform mankind, to give ſtronger ſanctions to the law of nature, and to be ſubſervient to government, have ſerved, in all ages, to very different purpoſes. They have promoted falſe conceptions of the deity, they have ſubſtituted ſuperſtition in the place of thoſe real duties which we owe to God and man, they have added new occaſions to thoſe that ſubſiſted before of enmity and ſtrife; and inſociability has increaſed as they have floriſhed. Nay, the firſt principles of them have been laid in it, in direct oppoſition to the religion of nature and reaſon, the firſt principle of which is a ſociability that flows from univerſal benevolence. We are obliged to except, out of the religions inſtituted by human authority, the jewiſh and the chriſtian; but we cannot except even theſe, as one of them was taught originally, as the other of them has been taught in the courſe of it, and as both of them have been practiſed, out of the religions that have ſerved to the ill purpoſes here mentioned, to that principally of inſociability. On the contrary, no religions have rendered the profeſſors

Digitized by Google

feſſors of them ſo inſociable to other men, as thoſe which have claimed truly, or falſely, to be immediate revelations of the Supreme Being, and have exacted an implicit faith as well as an implicit obedience. Inſociability was from the firſt, and continues ſtill, the great characteriſtic of judaiſm. So it was, and ſo it is of mahometiſm. So it was not of goſpel-chriſtianity, but ſo it is become of theological chriſtianity; if I may be allowed to make a diſtinction which will juſtify itſelf abundantly in every inſtance of compariſon.

THE wiſdom, as well as the power, that appears in the whole conſtruction, order, and harmony of the univerſe, muſt have carried, at all times, the ſame general conviction into the breaſt of every man who obſerved, and reflected on his own obſervations. BALBUS had therefore ſufficient reaſon to ſay, in a good ſenſe, what TULLY makes him him ſay, "he muſt want intelligence "himſelf who can believe that this ſtupendous ma-"chine was made and is preſerved without intelli-"gence," that is, without a diſtinct and ſuperior intelligence, not without intelligence of it's own; the intelligence of the maker, not that of the thing made; for this is ſuch an abſurdity as the refinements of philoſophy alone could adopt, and as can be never reconciled to the judgment of common ſenſe. "Caeleſtem ergo admirabilem ordi-"nem .... qui vacare mente putat, is ipſe mentis "expers habendus eſt," may be underſtood indeed to ſignify this very abſurdity in the mouth of a Stoic,

Digitized by Google

Stoic, and TULLY might mean to make BALBUS ſpeak in character, for which reaſon the paſſage ſhould never be quoted without any explanation, as it is continually, for an expoſition of true theiſm. But if the ſphere of POSIDONIUS had been ſent to the Britons, or to the Scythians, in the days of BALBUS and TULLY; if the machine called, I know not why, the Orrery, was ſent, in our days, to the Hottentots, or the Samojedes, theſe ſavages would ſmile at the ſtupidity of any of their brethren, if any ſo ſtupid ſhould be found among ſavages, who could imagine ſuch a machine to be the effect of chance, or to have contrived, and made itſelf. They would all conclude that it was the work of intelligence, and of greater ſkill than that which they employed to build their huts, or to ſhape their canoes. The moſt reaſonable among them could not fail to ſee, in the unity of the deſign, the unity of the artificer. But the vulgar, who make themſelves their own ideas, and their own manners, the meaſure of all things, might very eaſily conclude that the ſeveral parts of this machine were made, and the ſeveral motions of it were directed, by different intelligences. This opinion too might grow up to be general amongſt them, and the moſt rational ſavages might be obliged to yield to the leaſt rational: in advancing of which no more is aſſumed than what has happened in every age and country, even the moſt civiliſed, and the leaſt ignorant. But none of theſe ſavages would be abſurd enough to ſuppoſe, tho' philoſophers ſuch as the Stoicians have done

Digitized by Google

done little leſs, that the intelligence, which made every wheel of the machine to move, was in the wheel.

THE Romans, the Greeks, and, before them, all the learned nations of the eaſt, were in this caſe. The vulgar acknowledged a multitude of divinities, to whom they aſcribed every excellency, and every defect of their own nature; ſo that in worſhipping them they worſhipped in ſome ſort themſelves. Their wiſe men, who acknowledged the unity of a Supreme Being, and held theſe inferior divinities to be his creatures and miniſters, made even this being after their own image. The lovers of eaſe made him an indolent being, and wholly unconcerned about human affairs. The proud, who thought every thing that related to man equally important, and equally an object worthy of the divine care, made him a buſy trifling being. "MYRMECIDES aliquis, minutorum opuſculorum fabricator." They who converted, with profane timidity, a reverential awe into a ſuperſtitious fear of God, and made the exiſtence of a Supreme Being, which ought to be the comfort, the terror of mankind, ran into one of theſe extremes: They either ſcreened him from human ſight by the interpoſition of mediating, interceding, atoning, beings: or, fierce and cruel themſelves, they repreſented him hating without reaſon, revenging without provocation, and puniſhing without meaſure. The gay, the wanton, the luxurious, made gods and goddeſſes of the ſame characters; and

Digitized by Google

JUPITER himſelf, the father of gods and men, was liable to human paſſions, and partook of ſenſual pleaſures. Thus the vulgar believed, and thus the prieſts encouraged; whilſt the philoſophers, overborne by the torrent of polytheiſm, ſuffered them to believe, in ages when true theiſm was reputed atheiſm. There were others again who had, beſides that vanity which is common to all men, the particular vanity of believing themſelves choſen objects of the care of heaven, diſtinguiſhed by ſingular privileges, and predeſtinated to ſome glorious purpoſe or other. The Egyptians were the firſt of all men admitted to the ſight of the gods, and to a communication with them, according to JAMBLICHUS: and we may ſee what notions had been inſtilled into the Romans, of grandeur and empire, to which they were deſigned by the gods, when we read the pompous anſwer that JUPITER makes to his daughter, in the firſt book of the Eneid. I wave any further inſtances of the ſame kind: that of the Iſraelites, the moſt extraordinary of any, is too well known to be mentioned.

IT is unneceſſary too that I ſhould enumerate, in this place, any of thoſe metaphyſical whimſies, concerning the divine and human nature, which philoſophers broached, and brought into faſhion; as the vulgar had brought, tho' they had not been alone to invent, all the falſe conceptions that prevailed about the deity. Much has been ſaid already, and more will be ſaid on that ſubject.

What

What is to my purpose to observe here is, that the systems of theology, which philosophers, priests, and the rabble of the world, conspired to frame, were systems of superstition; that they passed however for systems of religion, revealed some how or other, to somebody or other, sometimes by the Supreme Being himself, sometimes by any other divine person, and, therefore, always of more authority than such as human reason could collect from the appearances of things. This persuasion too made it quite unnecessary to employ human reason about so superfluous a work: and thus an immense crop of superstitions grew up, choaked the seeds of natural religion, and corrupted, in a great degree, both public and private morality. In short, reason has been always controlled, natural religion and natural law have been almost entirely superseded, in every society of men: and many instances might be produced to shew that this has happened most in those which have been esteemed the most civilised. This has been the effect of imagination and passion, necessary, but dangerous, parts of our composition, under the influence of particular prejudices, and the direction of private motives in matters of the most public concern. If the revelations had not been pretended only; if the same divine wisdom, that shews both the existence and the will of God in his works, had prescribed any particular form of worship to mankind, and had inspired the particular applications of his general laws; the system of religious and civil government would have been uniform in

Digitized by Google

the whole world, as well as conformable to nature, and reaſon; and the ſtate of mankind would have arrived at human perfection. But it was not in the councils of the Moſt High, which it becomes us to adore and not to examine, that this ſhould be ſo: and therefore all theſe ſyſtems of religions and laws being nothing more than human expedients, there is no room to wonder that they have not been more effectual to good purpoſes, nor that the ſtate of mankind is ſuch as we feel, and as we are apt to complain that it is.

XXIII.

WE may aſſure, from fact, that this has been the divine economy; and leave thoſe men to aſſume from imagination what this economy has, or ſhould have been, who have ſo much theological preſumption. But whilſt we leave them to imagine without fact, we muſt not ſuffer them to imagine againſt it. Nothing can be, I think, more true, than what has been advanced concerning the unnatural religions, laws, and cuſtoms eſtabliſhed in the ſeveral ſocieties of men: and yet it is not leſs true, that the tables of natural religion and law are hung up in the ſight of all men. All may read them: and, tho error has prevailed, and will ever prevail in the bulk of mankind, againſt knowledge, more or leſs, and to ſome degree, becauſe it is agreeable to the private intereſts of thoſe who lead, and to the prejudices of thoſe who are led, that it ſhould; I do not believe that there ever was a time,

Digitized by Google

a time, when it could be ſaid with truth that the law of nature was imperfectly known, or that it was an incomplete ſyſtem of morality before the chriſtian revelation: both of which propoſitions are roundly advanced by divines, tho manifeſtly falſe.

Dr. Clarke ſays, in his Evidences of natural and revealed religion, which are often dim, and often weak, that the heathen philoſophers were never able to prove, and explain clearly and diſtinctly enough, to perſons of all capacities, thoſe things which they were the moſt fully certain of, and did in good meaſure underſtand; ſuch as the obligations of virtue, and the will of God, in matters of morality. Now if it could be reconciled to common ſenſe that they underſtood not fully, but in good meaſure only, ſuch doctrines as they are ſaid in the ſame ſentence to have been fully certain of, there would be no occaſion to wonder that they were unable to prove and explain them. But to paſs this over, the reaſons alledged to ſhew their inability in this reſpect, or that they underſtood theſe things in good meaſure only, are ſuch as give, indeed, great occaſion to wonder when they fall from the pen of ſo able a writer. Their diſcourſes, he ſays, were rather ſpeculative and learned, nice and ſubtile diſputes, than practical and uſeful inſtructions: the bulk of mankind could not profit by the ſublime doctrine of Plato, for inſtance. Agreed. The difficulty then of diſcovering and explaining the will of God, in mat-

Digitized by Google

ters of morality, and the whole ſyſtem of natural religion, aroſe merely from the method they took of diſcovering it to themſelves, and of explaining it to others. That is, they did by this ſyſtem the very thing which divines have done by that of chriſtianity. Philoſophers departed from the ſimplicity of nature, divines from that of the goſpel. Had the former been content to collect the will of God, as far as it concerns the duty of man, from what they knew of themſelves, of their fellow creatures, and of the conſtitution, phyſical and moral, of the world, they had neither bewildered themſelves, nor grown unintelligible to others. But they could not be ſo content. Many of theſe antient, like their mimics, the modern, reaſoners a priori, undertook to deduce the religion of human nature and of human reaſon, from principles that exiſt infinitely beyond them. They knew human nature; and from thence they might, by the help of human reaſon have taught very clearly what they underſtood very fully. They did both when they kept within theſe bounds: but when they went beyond them, they did neither. When they pretended to contemplate the nature and moral attributes of the Supreme Being, they were, indeed, as unqualified for it as bats are to behold the light of the ſun. They puzzled the cleareſt, and confounded the moſt diſtinct, ideas, ſometimes by metaphyſical enthuſiaſm, and ſometimes by political deſign; for when ſuch miſts are conjured up in the moſt ſerene parts of our intellectual ſyſtem, it cannot be intended by men who are

Digitized by Google

are in their ſenſes, one would think, to make us ſee better: and, therefore, I could never read the propoſition, that we may eaſily know God, if we be not ignorant of ourſelves, ſo abſolutely advanced, nor that ſtrange parallel between God and the ſoul of man, wherein Dr. BARROW confeſſes that he indulged his thoughts ſomewhat freely,* without being ſorry to find them in the works of ſo reſpectable an author.

ANOTHER reaſon, brought by CLARKE, to ſhew how unable theſe philoſophers were to prove and explain the obligations of natural religion is this: They were never able to frame to themſelves any complete, regular, and conſiſtent ſyſtem or ſcheme of things. If by theſe words be meaned, as it muſt be in this place, ſuch a ſyſtem or ſcheme of morality, the fact aſſerted is untrue, how excellently ſoever the eloquent LACTANTIUS may have ſet this matter forth, or the judicious JUSTIN may have ſupported our modern doctor. In contradiction to all three, we may affirm boldly, becauſe truly, that there is no one moral virtue, which has not been taught, explained, and proved, by the heathen philoſophers, both occaſionally and purpoſely. It is, therefore, particularly abſurd in chriſtian writers to ſay, as the author of the Evidences ſays, after his two guides, that theſe philoſophers did, indeed, diſcover all the particular doctrines of true religion; but that no one of them made a ſcheme true in all it's parts, nor did any

* Vol. II. Serm. vii.

Digitized by Google

one collect the ſeveral truths ſcattered up and down in their writings. For, I aſk, are all the truths of natural and revealed religion collected into one regular and complete ſyſtem in any of the Goſpels, or even of the Epiſtles? Did any one of the fathers of the church make an entire ſcheme of religion or morality true in all it's parts? Will any man have the front to deny that they all mingled ſome truth and ſome error? Did not this very LACTANTIUS, did not JUSTIN, do ſo? Did any one of the fathers collect the truths that concern all our moral obligations, ſeparate them from the errors, and make a regular complete ſyſtem of the whole? Will it be ſaid that St. AMBROSE did? But St. AMBROSE was a poor imitator of TULLY. In ſhort, all the heathen philoſophers agreed that the practice of virtue was of neceſſary and indiſpenſable obligation, and that the happineſs of mankind depended on it in general and in particular. They all agreed likewiſe what was virtue, and what was vice: and if they had any diſputes about the great principles of natural, Chriſtians had the ſame about the great principles of revealed, religion. They had ſuch in the days of JUSTIN and of LACTANTIUS; and that they continued to have them in our days, CLARKE himſelf has been a ſignal example.

IT was neither natural theology, nor ethics, that perplexed natural religion. It was metaphyſical theology. Antient, like modern; heathen, like chriſtian, philoſophers had indeed many trifling diſputes about words, the Stoics particularly; or about

Digitized by Google

about things so very plain, that nothing less than grecian acuteness could make them appear at all intricate. Such were those about the summum bonum, in which, it is said, there were two hundred and fourscore different opinions.* That there were so many may be doubted; but that they must have been extremely various is certain. The summum bonum, or the supreme good of man, as it was understood and taught by the heathen philosophers, and which Dr. CLARKE calls, not without a designed ambiguity, the final happiness of man, was a subject whereon every man had a right to pronounce for himself, and no man had a right to pronounce for another. These disputes were, therefore, very trifling. But they should not be so strongly objected, since it is easy to shew that christian divines, the schoolmen especially, have trifled as much on points relative to natural and revealed religion both, as ever the heathen did on points relative to the former. Of the christian trifles too we may say, what could not be said of the others, that they became serious: "hae nugae "ad seria ducunt." They have divided the schools, and the schools have divided the world, with circumstances of rage and cruelty to be found among no other parties.

XXIV.

IF such disputes, as that which has been mentioned, were easy, or might be thought unnecessary, to be determined; disputes of another

* VARRO, St. AUSTIN.

Digitized by Google

kind aroſe when the heathen philoſophers attempted, for they did attempt, to make a complete, regular, and conſiſtent ſyſtem or ſcheme of things, the want of which is objected to them. Theſe attempts were puſhed very far by pagan theiſts: but it muſt be confeſſed that they ſerved only to ſhew that men are fitted to know a little of ſome few things, and the whole of nothing. Theſe men found ſoon that no ſufficient materials for ſuch a ſyſtem or ſcheme lay within the bounds of natural law, and natural theology. They had recourſe, therefore, to metaphyſical theology, which being a ſcience of their own invention, it was eaſy for them to eſtabliſh ſuch principles in it, as they judged ſufficient for their purpoſe. They proceeded, therefore, to reverſe the whole order of reaſoning in the ſearch of truth, to reverſe the pyramid; and, inſtead of riſing up from a broad foundation of particulars, laid in knowledge, to the lofty and narrow pinacle of all knowledge, the exiſtence of one all-perfect Being, they affected prepoſterouſly to ſet this pinacle on the ground, and to raiſe the pyramid without any foundations at all. They not only reaſoned concerning the nature and attributes of God himſelf from mere imagination, but they gave him as many companions and miniſters, gods, angels, demons, genii, as they thought fit. CLARKE ſays, and moſt of his brethren agree with him, that to reaſon in this manner, from the nature and attributes of God, is the very firſt and moſt neceſſary thing of all. His and their approbation

of

Digitized by Google

of the reaſoning of pagan theiſts, in conſequence of this firſt and moſt neceſſary thing of all, would not be quite ſo full; and indeed it may ſeem to have been introduced for ornament, rather than for uſe, by thoſe who made the one Supreme Being, according to the nature and attributes they give him, ſo immediately active in human affairs. But the pagan theiſts declined no help; and the ſervice their gods, and other inferior beings were of, in accounting for the creation and government of the world, is known to every man who has been converſant in their writings, in thoſe of PLATO particularly. When they wanted to account for the origin of evil, ditheiſm was invented; when they wanted to account for the ſuppoſed unjuſt diſtribution of good and evil, the "mythologia "de inferis."

BUT to be more particular. CLARKE obſerves that bare reaſon cannot diſcover in what manner, and with what kind of external ſervice, God will be worſhipped. He might have added, that bare reaſon cannot diſcover how any external ſervice, that man can pay, ſhould be acceptable to the ſupreme and all-perfect Being, except a compliance in all our words and actions with his known will, revealed in his works, an inward adoration of his unknown nature, a gratitude for benefits, and an entire reſignation to his providence. The heathens knew that all the duties of natural religion are contained under theſe heads, but that the divine will concerning any external ſervice, with which God would

Digitized by Google

would be worſhipped, had been ſignified relatively to none of theſe duties. They might, therefore, as the beſt and wiſeſt of them did, approve the political inſtitutions of an external ſervice, as political inſtitutions, and as far as they helped to keep up a lively ſenſe of theſe duties in the minds of men, and to promote the practice of them. But they, who preſumed to reaſon boldly about the nature and attributes of God, were not ſo content. They repreſented the one Supreme Being, to themſelves and others, under as many different characters as they repreſented their different gods. The moſt general repreſentation of him, becauſe it was thought the moſt proper to intimidate mankind, and to anſwer the ends of government, or becauſe it was that which natural and ſuperſtitious fear could the moſt eaſily frame, was framed under the image of an abſolute tyrannical monarch. From ſuch notions theſe reaſoners a priori deduced all thoſe, whereby they took men out of the relation of creatures to their creator, and placed them in that of ſlaves to their tyrant. From hence thoſe numberleſs, ridiculous, and cruel rites of paganiſm, which were held as neceſſary to obtain the favor, and to avert the anger, of heaven, as the ſtricteſt obſervation of morality; nay more neceſſary, if we may judge, as we may moſt reaſonably, of antient by modern, and of pagan by chriſtian, theology.

OBEDIENCE to the law of nature is our firſt duty, and our greateſt intereſt: the happineſs of our whole

Digitized by Google

whole kind, wherein every individual is included, depends on it. Obedience carries it's reward, disobedience it's puniſhment, along with it in the general ſyſtem: and God has not made particular ſyſtems, nor eſtabliſhed particular providences, for particular nations, much leſs for particular men, as far as we can diſcover by the help of reaſon and experience. The ſame cauſes produce the ſame effects every where, with ſome little variety of circumſtances; and as the precepts of the law are common to all men, ſo are the ſanctions of it. In ſhort, as all men ſin againſt the order of nature more or leſs, ſo the imperfect ſtate of mankind ſhews that they ſuffer more or leſs by the uniform courſe of it. But neither reaſon nor experience will ſhew us, in the author of nature, an angry revengeful judge, or a bloody executioner. Neither reaſon nor experience will lead us to inquire what propitiation God will accept, nor in what manner a reconciliation between the Supreme Being and this worm man is to be made *. Natural reaſon does not ſtop here, nor expect with impatience the aid of ſome particular revelation. She ſtops much ſooner. Repentance, as it implies amendment, is one of her doctrines, a neceſſary conſequence of her principles, and ſhe does not ſo much as ſuſpect that any further revelation is wanting to eſtabliſh it. But the reaſoners a priori did, on falſe principles, in this caſe, and in many others, what an unreaſoning vulgar had done through

* Clarke in his Evid.

ignorance,

Digitized by Google

ignorance, and without any principles at all, except thoſe of ſuperſtition. They took off from the real perfections of the Supreme Being, and they added imaginary excellencies to the human nature: like PROCRUSTES, they ſtretched out humanity, and lopped off from divinity, with great metaphyſical pains, as much as they could: and when they found that one of theſe lines was ſtill too ſhort, and the other ſtill too long, to anſwer their purpoſe of making them nearly commenſurate, they ſpun a thread out of imagination, to lengthen the ſhorteſt.

ON ſuch notions of the divine and human nature, egyptian, chaldean, magian, and almoſt all the theiſts of antiquity, founded their theology: on the authority of which they inſtituted various forms of worſhip, and promoted ſuperſtitious opinions by their attempts to diſcover the whole ſcheme and ſyſtem of things; ſome of which infected even the fathers of our church in antient times, and would be avowed at this time by none but Roſicrucians, and fanatics as mad as them. In fine, this was the ſource from which ſo many religious ceremonies and obſervances, that had no direction to promote natural religion, though pretending to derive their inſtitution from the author of it, aroſe. Sins were multiplied, and the terrors of ſuperſtitious minds increaſed. But even if theſe terrors had been righly and ſolely applied to real crimes, not to ſins of arbitrary diſcipline, they would have been of little effect, ſince the means of recon-

Digitized by Google

reconciling all ſinners to an offended deity were made by this theology extremely eaſy. Strange means indeed they were, and ſuch as coſt the offender little. Such were expiatory ſacrifices, wherein the blood of an innocent beaſt, or man, was ſhed to atone for the guilty perſon: as if God was appeaſed whenever the prieſts were glutted with roaſt meat, or as if it were indifferent to him whoſe blood was ſhed, provided his altars reeked with gore. This expiation was puſhed to ſuch a degree of pious inhumanity, that fathers made burnt offerings of their children to MOLOCH. I call it pious, becauſe they who never offered up themſelves ſeemed however to prove their repentance, as ABRAHAM was ready to prove his faith, much better by ſacrificing their children, than a ram or an ox. They ſacrificed what they held deareſt next to themſelves: and they might think that they had the example of the gods to authoriſe the practice, for SANCHONIATHON, it is ſaid, related that SATURN had offered up his only ſon in the time of a plague. "Coelo patri in holocau-
"ſtum obtulit."

THIS was one effect of theological ingraftments on natural religion. The Supreme Being was repreſented ſo vindicative and cruel, that nothing leſs than acts of the utmoſt cruelty could appeaſe his anger, and that his prieſts were ſo many butchers of men and other animals. Another ingraftment of the ſame kind was deduced from a very contrary notion, from a notion that God was con-

Digitized by Google

conſtantly attentive to the affairs of men, to the leaſt, and to the moſt important alike; that he entered into the cloſeſt familiarity with ſome, and gave audience at all times to all. Aſtoniſhing inſtances of this ſort, as well as of the former, might be cited; for the ſame theology, which repreſented the all-perfect Being rigorous and ſevere, without any regard to his mercy, or even to his juſtice; repreſented him, with moſt theological inconſiſtency, on other occaſions gracious, converſable, affable, without any regard to his majeſty, or to the infinite ſuperiority of his nature. But theſe inſtances are ſo eaſily found, and they are ſo ſhocking to every ſincere theiſt who frames the moſt elevated, and therefore the leaſt unworthy, ſentiments he is able of God, that I am willing to ſave myſelf and you the trouble of reflecting on them. "Ita "tetra ſunt, ut ea fugiat et reformidet oratio."* How ſhould they be otherwiſe, when ignorance and ſuperſtition were firſt to produce them, and when the eternal unalterable reaſon of things, the knowledge of which is claimed by men who approve ſome of the moſt deteſtable of theſe inſtances, and who produce others of their own growth, but upon the ſame principles, is for the moſt part nothing elſe than the reaſon of party, of prejudice, of profeſſion, and of authority? Let me, therefore, mention one alone. It ſhall be one that is common to all religions, and that carries with it, in general practice, more matter of ridicule, than of horror. The inſtance, I mean, is prayer; or,

* Cic. Tuſc. diſ.

to

Digitized by Google

to ſpeak more properly, the abuſe of prayer. To keep up a due ſenſe of our dependance on God, for which purpoſe this inſtitution may be a very uſeful, and, conſequently a very rational, expedient, is the duty of every man. But then it muſt be practiſed in a manner reconcileable to other duties of religion; in the firſt place, to an awful reverence, which conſiſts in the inward ſentiment wholly, and ſo little in outward demonſtrations, that when theſe are carried too far they become a ludicrous pageantry of devotion, and ſerve rather to deſtroy it in moſt minds, than to maintain it in any; to an abſolute reſignation in the next place, one act of which is preferable to ten thouſand collects. Men are fond of acceſs to the Supreme Being. Nothing can flatter humanity ſo much. As ſoon, therefore, as they are taught that they may have it, not only by their proxies, the prieſts, but by themſelves immediately, they uſe it familiarly and impertinently. They put up contradictory petitions to heaven in all the churches of the world. Some would be hurtful to themſelves if they were granted, and almoſt all would be ſo to others. If the true God could be importuned, as LUCIAN repreſents JUPITER, he would be importuned to change at every moment the diſpoſitions of his infinite wiſdom, and to accommodate the whole economy of his providence in a manner that implies often contradiction, to different and oppoſite intereſts, nay to the different and oppoſite caprices, not of nations alone, but of particular men, women, and children.

SINCE

Digitized by Google

SINCE I have mentioned this part of divine worſhip, among other external ſervices, it may be proper to take notice of the Second Alcibiades which Dr. CLARKE quotes, and which will ſerve, if I miſtake not, my purpoſe better than his. In that dialogue, SOCRATES inſiſts on the danger of addreſſing particular petitions to the gods, leſt we ſhould aſk what is evil in itſelf, or what may prove ſo in the event. He recites the prayer of ſome antient poet, which is little elſe than a ſhort act of reſignation. He commends the Lacedemonians for addreſſing themſelves in much the ſame ſtyle to the gods, when they aſked in general "pulchra "cum bonis." He mentions the preference given by the oracle of JUPITER HAMMON to the prayers of the Lacedemonians over thoſe of the Athenians, and the reſt of the Greeks. The authority of HOMER is brought, as PLATO, PLUTARCH, and generally the antient writers are apt to alledge it on all occaſions very impertinently, to prove that the gods are prone to be angry, and to bear hatred even to whole nations. But SOCRATES concludes very rationally, that if they are ſo, they are not to be bribed by ſacrifices, by offerings, and by external ſervices; and that they regard the purity of the heart alone. SOCRATES thought that human errors about the will of God, and the duty of man, proceeded from pride more than ignorance, and therefore adviſed ALCIBIADES, of the purity of whoſe heart he had no very good opinion, "ſince he would not make uſe of the gene-

ral

"ral reſigned prayer of the Lacedemonians be-
"cauſe of his pride, to wait till he had learned
"how to behave himſelf towards the gods and
"towards men." He adds, "that one who had
"a concern for him, and a wonderful care of him,
"would be his inſtructor, and would diſpel the
"darkneſs of his mind, as MINERVA in HOMER
"takes the cloud from before the eyes of DIO-
"MEDE, that he might be able to diſcern what
"was good from what was evil."

WHETHER it be as difficult, as CLARKE imagined, to ſuppoſe that SOCRATES meant himſelf in this paſſage, I examine not. Let it be that he meant the demon of ALCIBIADES. Since the maſter had an attending demon who diſſuaded and reſtrained him when that was neceſſary, the ſcholar might have one who would inform, and determine him whenever that ſhould be neceſſary. Nay more. Let it be, as ſome learned men* have obſerved, that PLATO began to write immediately after the three laſt prophets of the Jews, as if God had raiſed up him to ſupply their place. Let them cite, in favour of this opinion, another paſſage, wherein this philoſopher ſays "that if a
"perfectly juſt man ſhould appear in the world,
"he would be impriſoned, buffetted, whipped,
"and crucified: which muſt needs have been a
"prophecy of CHRIST, becauſe CHRIST was whip-
"ped and crucified; whereas SOCRATES only
"drank the poiſon by which he was condemned

* DACIER.

" to die." Let the ſame learned men take this paſſage too, in the Second Alcibiades, if they pleaſe, for another prophecy of the coming of CHRIST, and of a divine revelation, ſince remote events, and a diſtant time are often ſignified by immediate events, and the preſent time, in prophetical language.

SUCH prophecies in PLATO will not be readily, nor generally admitted, I think; neither does CLARKE inſiſt that they ſhould. But it muſt be admitted that PLATO inſinuates, in many places, the want, or the neceſſity, of a divine revelation to diſcover the external ſervice God requires, and the expiation for ſin, to give ſtronger aſſurances of the rewards and puniſhments that await men in another world, concerning which, however, he had received particular information by one who returned from thence on purpoſe, and to frame a ſyſtem of the whole order of things, both in this world and the next, that is, of the whole economy of God's diſpenſations to man, and of his government in heaven and on earth.

XXV.

IT was on ſome of theſe ſubjects SOCRATES had diſcourſed, when SIMMIAS ſpoke to him in the manner quoted by CLARKE. He had owned that he did not expect to attain a full knowledge of theſe things, till the ſoul was ſeparated from the body, and entirely purified in that other world, of which he

he gave ſo topographical a deſcription. The concluſion was, "that, ſince they could not acquire "a certain knowledge of the truth here, they "ſhould fix on the beſt and ſafeſt of human rea-"ſons, and venture on that bottom through the "ſtorms of life; unleſs they could get one ſtill "more firm, ſuch as ſome divine revelation would "be, to render their paſſage leſs dangerous." This is now the ſecond of the proofs brought to ſhew "that the beſt, wiſeſt, and leaſt ſuperſti-"tious of the philoſophers confeſſed their ſenſe "of the want of a divine revelation, and hoped "for ſomething of that nature." The proofs are pompouſly introduced; but the whole force of them amounts to no more than this, that SOCRATES, if in truth SOCRATES did ſay all that his ſcholar makes him ſay, was much in the wrong for not adding curioſity to pride, among the cauſes of human error concering the will of God, and the duty of man: but SOCRATES himſelf had a great mind to know more than God has made his human creatures capable of knowing, and, therefore, more than he judged it neceſſary or uſeful for them to know. The imaginary want had, therefore, no other principle, than metaphyſical curioſity. It could have no other. Nothing could be wanting to the divine purpoſe where God had given, tho he had limited, the means. How abſurd, how trifling is it then to bring the opinion of philoſophers concerning this want, and their hopes that it would be ſupplied, as a proof that the want was real, and that, after it had been long

Digitized by Google

complained of, it was ſupplied? I paſs over another pretended proof of the ſame kind. PORPHYRY, whom it is impoſſible to ſee ranked among the leaſt ſuperſtitious philoſophers without ſurpriſe, found, it ſeems, that the univerſal method of delivering ſouls was not ſufficiently known by philoſophers.

In general, theſe men complained that ſenſe reached but a little way in acquiring knowledge, that the human mind was weak, that the human life was ſhort, and that the truth of things lay deep in darkneſs.* Theſe complaints related to all parts of ſcience, phyſical and metaphyſical, to natural philoſophy as well as natural theology: and I might, therefore, make the ſame uſe of them in one caſe, that CLARKE makes in the other. I might bring the imperfect knowledge of corporeal nature, and the ſenſe philoſophers had of this imperfection, in proof that ſome neceſſary knowledge of this kind was wanting, and that they had reaſon to hope the defect would be ſupplied ſooner or later, ſome how or other, in a natural or in a ſupernatural way. I might beg the queſtion, like the doctor; and, having aſſumed that they were ignorant of many things neceſſary to the phyſical, as he aſſumes with much leſs reaſon that they were of many things neceſſary to the moral, advantages of life; I might argue that

* Anguſtos ſenſus, imbecillos animos, brevia curricula vitae, in profundo veritatem eſſe demerſam, omnia tenebris circumfuſa eſſe.

they

Digitized by Google

they had reaſon to expect a time would come, when men would be rendered able to diſcover not only the ſecond, but the firſt qualities of ſubſtances, to reaſon from a general knowledge of eſſences, not from a particular knowledge of effects, and to frame by theſe and other extraordinary means a complete, regular, and conſiſtent ſcheme or ſyſtem of the whole economy of corporeal nature.

In this manner I might repreſent the wants, the complaints, and the expectations of the heathen philoſophers. Thus I might argue: and my repreſentation and my argument would be extremely ridiculous. But are thoſe of Clarke leſs ſo? I think not. Theſe philoſophers, ſuch of them, at leaſt, whoſe works are come down to us, were very ignorant in phyſics. But in natural theology, and in morality, their knowledge was not deficient, though it was confined, in the former, to a very few general propoſitions. They had the ſame natural means of knowing that we have, and they knew, as well as we know, that "there is a firſt intelligent cauſe of all things, "that the infinite wiſdom and power of this Be-"ing made and preſerves the univerſe, and that "his providence governs it." They knew then, very fully, the relation in which they ſtood to this Being, the relation of dependent creatures and ſubjects: and this knowledge was ſufficient, or none would be ſo, to enforce the laws he had given them; for the ſame means that diſcovered

Digitized by Google

the divine exiſtence, diſcovered the divine will in the whole extent of our moral obligations. We might have expected that CLARKE would have ſpecified ſome of theſe moral obligations which were unknown, or imperfectly known, to the philoſophers, after all his inſinuations concerning their ignorance. But, inſtead of doing this, he inſiſts, in the very place where his ſubject required it, on ſuch obſervances, ſuch doctrines, and ſuch ſpeculations alone, as have been ſince indeed impoſed by the chriſtian revelation, but as cannot be reckoned neceſſary parts, nor, in truth, any parts, of the religion of nature and of reaſon. LACTANTIUS, whom he quotes ſo often, and whoſe ſuffrage is in this caſe of more weight, becauſe his zeal for chriſtianity was ſuch, that he defended and taught it before he underſtood it, gives up the point. The philoſophers, according to him, diſcovered the whole truth, and the whole ſecret of divine religion.* No doubt they did ſo: and the natural divine religion, which they diſcovered, is the foundation of the chriſtian. There is no one moral precept in the whole goſpel, as I have hinted already, which was not taught by heathen philoſophers. Even thoſe refinements upon virtue, to which our divines are willing to ſuppoſe that mere humanity could not reach, were taught by ſome heathen ſages, and practiſed by ſome heathen ſaints, as well before, as after, the coming of CHRIST. Be-

* Totam igitur veritatem, et omne divinae religionis arcanum philoſophi attigerunt. Lib. vii.

fore

fore this time, their religion, that I mean of ſome of the philoſophers, was much more ſpiritual than that of the Jews. After this time, it vied for ſpirituality, for myſtery, and for ſupernatural effects, with the chriſtian. To be humble, to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, to mortify the fleſh, to be patient under afflictions, to forgive injuries, to return good for evil, were particular doctrines of paganiſm, as univerſal charity or benevolence was the broad foundation of their moral ſyſtem. This matter is ſtrongly and largely exemplified in the third book of the Alnetanae quaeſtiones; for it ſerved biſhop HUET's argument in that place to ſhew what it ſerved Dr. CLARKE's argument in his Evidences to conceal.

How trifling is it, after this, to inſiſt on the diſputes of a theological kind; for of a moral kind there were, properly ſpeaking, none, that aroſe among the philoſophers? They were diſputes about words, or about ſome very inſignificant ſpeculations; and no more: for the morality of ZENO, and of EPICURUS, reduced to practice, was the ſame. But to proceed: how ſtrongly might this objection be retorted on the fathers of the chriſtian church? To object that the heathen had no one complete ſcheme wherein all the moral duties were collected together, inſtead of being taught occaſionally, is ridiculous, ſince the ſame objection might be made, if it was one, to chriſtianity likewiſe. But the divines

Digitized by Google

who object this mean ſomething more. When they ſay that the philoſophers were unable to comprehend the truth of religion, tho they diſcovered and explained almoſt all the particulars wherein it conſiſts,* they mean by the entire ſcheme they refer to, the ſummary of their own theology, wherein the fall and the redemption of man, and all the myſteries of chriſtianity are contained. This they call the whole doctrine, and deſign of true religion from the original to the conſummation of all things: and of this indeed the heathen philoſophers might well be ignorant, ſince no man could know it who was not taught by St. PAUL, or by ſome chriſtian doctor.†

THUS their ignorance of true religion is accounted for not a little hypothetically. But even thus their complaints are not juſtified, nor the expectations imputed to them rendered reaſonable. They muſt needs be ignorant of true religion, if natural religion was a part of it only, even at that time, as it is at this. They could not know a revealed religion, nor any real want of it, before the revelation was made: and the knowledge they had was ſuch as the Author of nature had thought ſufficient, ſince he had given them no more. Their complaints and their expectations, therefore, were founded in proud curioſity, and vain

* .... Quamvis ea fere, quibus ſumma ipſa conſtat, et viderint, et explicaverint. LACT. L. vii.

† Verum autem non niſi ejus ſcire eſt, qui ſit doctus a Deo. Ib.

pre-

Digitized by Google

presumption. The use which CLARKE makes of them is something worse. To approve them, and to deduce from the supposed reasonableness of them the necessity of a further revelation, is to weigh his own opinion, and theirs, against providence. It is to say, that they saw before, and that he has seen since this further revelation was made, the necessity of it to reform mankind effectually, by opening to them the whole doctrine and design of true religion, which were opened in part only to the heathen world; and that the event has justified the complaints, and the expectation. This latter has been a topic of much theological triumph. "Bring me a man", says LACTANTIUS *, "who is choleric, who is given "to rail, who is unruly and fierce, with a few words "of God I will render him as tame as a sheep. "Bring me one who is given up to his lust," and so he goes on. "Numquis haec philosophorum "aut unquam praestitit, aut, praestare si velit, po-"test?" Did any one of the philosophers do so much, or could he, if he would? "It was hard," "says St. AUSTIN, where he mentions the letter of PORPHYRY to ANEBO, "it was hard for so great a "philosopher to discover, to expose, and boldly "to convict the whole diabolical society, which "every little old christian woman discovers at "once, and detests openly. Quam quaelibet "anicula christiana nec nosse cunctatur, et liber-"rime detestatur." Thus the triumph of the gospel over ignorance and immorality, and the

* Vid. the quotation in the Evid.

refor-

Digitized by Google

reformation of the world, by the publication of it, are frequently magnified. But when we conſider the means of reforming mankind, which the heathen philoſophers, and the chriſtian divines, have had in their turns, and compare the progreſs made in this great work by both, it will appear that the former had not ſufficient means (ſo far their complaints were well founded) nor the latter a ſucceſs proportionable to the means they had. In ſhort, if CLARKE's way of reaſoning be good, ſome extraordinary and ſupernatural aſſiſtance to reform the world, is ſtill wanting; for it would be impious to ſay that a further revelation is juſt as neceſſary now as it was before the coming of CHRIST.

XXVI.

TO ſpeak of the want of ſufficient means to propagate natural religion, diſtinctly from the want of a ſufficient knowledge of it, which are often purpoſely confounded together, that the firſt, which is true, may cover the laſt which is falſe, muſt be our next taſk.

THERE was no creed, nor any act of uniformity, impoſed on the heathen philoſophers. But ſtill it is not true that the ſyſtem of moral obligations, or natural religion, was to them a wide ſea wherein they wandered without knowing their way, or having any guide. It is not true that they were unable to make out upon what principles originally, and for what end ultimately, the choice

Digitized by Google

choice of virtue was to be made *. They had better guides than CLARKE, whom it was in their power to follow, nature and reaſon; one pointed out their way with a ſteady hand, and the other was ſufficient to lead them in it, the very purpoſe for which it was given. The original principles of this choice were ſtrongly laid in the conſtitution of things: and theſe philoſophers muſt have been ſtupid, as well as blind, if they had not felt, as well as ſeen, that the ultimate end of this choice was the happineſs of mankind. They felt it, they ſaw it, they proved it to others. Virtue was not only recommended as wiſe, and reaſonable, and fit to be choſen, but ſurely it was eſtabliſhed by them to be of plain neceſſity, and indiſpenſable obligation; ſince it was taught to be the perfection of our nature, as well as the poſitive will of God; and ſince the greateſt part of them did their utmoſt to eſtabliſh a belief of rewards and puniſhments in a future life, that they might allure to virtue, and deter from vice, the more effectually. But the generality of mankind continued in their evil habits, notwithſtanding all theſe doctrines, and all the inſtitutions contrived to enforce them. What promiſed to be effectual in ſpeculation, proved ineffectual in practice. Vice was checked, but virtue did not prevail. The conqueſt was never complete.

SHALL we ſay that the reaſon of this was becauſe the miſſionaries of natural religion, who ſet them-

* Vid. Evid. p. 176. 191.

ſelves

Digitized by Google

ſelves in earneſt about this excellent work, were few *? But this reaſon will not hold: for how few ſoever they might be in general, they were numerous enough at particular times, in particular places; and yet even then and there we do not find that they made any proportionable progreſs, altho' they could not fail to do ſome good by their exhortations, inſtructions, and examples. SOCRATES, his ſcholars, and all the great men whom the academy produced, may be reckoned a number of miſſionaries ſufficient to preach the duties of natural religion with full effect in ſuch a city as Athens. SOCRATES ſet himſelf in good earneſt, ſurely, about this excellent work. He went from ſtreet to ſtreet, and from one public place to another, as the apoſtles did ſome centuries afterwards in their diſperſions. If he preached with the ſame ſimplicity, he preached with the ſame zeal. If he had not all the gifts of the Spirit, he had ſome of them, no doubt; for tho' he could not work miracles to prove the divinity of his miſſion, he died to prove the truth of his doctrine. What was the effect of all this? He made a great, he could not make a good, man of his favorite diſciple ALCIBIADES; and tho' he rendered, or contributed to render, the ſchools of philoſophy nurſeries of religion, as well as of learning, which were always open, and always crowded, yet how ſmall a progreſs was made in the athenian commonwealth towards the reformation of mankind? Miſſionaries

* Evid. p. 173.

were

Digitized by Google

were not wanting in this inſtance, and a greater number would not have had a greater effect.

SHALL we ſay that the reaſon of this was, becauſe many of the philoſophers were ſo vicious themſelves, that they contradicted their precepts by their examples, "ut cum eorum vita mirabili-"ter pugnet oratio?" This reaſon will not hold neither, and I might be ſurpriſed at CLARKE for bringing it, if I did not conſider him, like other polemical writers, accuſtomed to vend his arguments by tale rather than by weight, and ready to employ ſuch as have a ſpecious appearance, how weak ſoever they really are, in hopes that ſome of his readers may be caught by them. TULLY boaſts in his ſecond Tuſculan, as he does in all his writings, the wonderful effects of philoſophy: and thoſe which he mentions are ſuch as natural theology and moral philoſophy can alone produce, "medetur animis, inanes ſolicitudines detrahit, "cupiditatibus liberat, pellit timores." But philoſophy cannot produce theſe, he ſays *, in all men alike, nor be of any great efficacy, unleſs ſhe works on a ſuitable and proper nature: for which reaſon philoſophers themſelves, they who have taught, diſputed, and writ on all theſe ſubjects, have been ſeldom influenced by them. Scarce here and there one is to be found who lives up to his own doctrines and rules of life. TULLY purſues

* Non idem poteſt apud omnes. Tum valet multum cum eſt idoneam complexa naturam.

his

Digitized by Google

his invective againſt the levity, vanity, inconſiſtency, avarice, and other vices of theſe men: and CLARKE imagined that this ſketch of their characters would furniſh an excellent reaſon the more, whereby to account for the little progreſs they made in reforming the world. But he ſhould have been reſtrained from inſiſting on this argument, both by the reaſon of the thing, and by a regard to the order of which he was. If the vices of many among thoſe, who were miſſionaries of morality in the heathen world, diſappointed the common endeavours of all; how came it to paſs that chriſtianity made ſo great a progreſs afterwards? How can the clergy of your church, or of ours, pretend that they contribute now, or ever did contribute, to the reformation of mankind? No age, whereof we have any certain anecdotes, can be pointed out, wherein all the vices, that TULLY imputes to moſt of the heathen philoſophers, did not prevail among moſt of the chriſtian divines, with great circumſtances of aggravation. They have had not only all the vices incident to human nature in common with other men, but they have had the particular vices of their order; for ſuch there are, and ſuch I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew that there are. Read the entire paſſage, conſult your memory, look round you, and then you ſhall tell me what you think of CLARKE's argument. You ſhall tell it in my ear: I expect no more; for I know how deſirous you are to keep fair with orders, whatever liberties you take with particular men. For my own part, who have not the ſame

diſ-

Digitized by Google

diſcretion, I will ſay boldly that the clergy both of your church and of mine are, in general, the moſt negligent of miſſionaries, and fitter much to hinder by their example, than to promote by their doctrine, the advancement of religion, natural or revealed.

SHALL we ſay that the ſublime doctrines, and abſtract arguments of PLATO, and other philoſophers, were by no means fitted for the bulk and common ſort of mankind? Or ſhall we fix the reaſon of the little progreſs they made, in their ignorance of the whole ſcheme, order, and ſtate of things? Should we do both, like the author of the Evidences, we ſhould, like him, contradict ourſelves; becauſe, if the doctrines of PLATO, for inſtance, were too ſublime, and his arguments too abſtract, they muſt have been much more ſo had he known, and gone about to explain all that is called the whole ſcheme, order, and ſtate of things. It is marvellous to conſider how many of the moſt refined precepts of chriſtian morality were taught by him, ſeveral centuries before CHRIST and his apoſtles taught them. Such were thoſe about imitating God, and others that have been mentioned above. It is ſtill more marvellous to conſider that ſome of the moſt profound myſteries of chriſtianity were taught by this philoſopher, ſeveral centuries before they were revealed. Such was the doctrine of the trinity; in explaining which if he advanced ſome errors, he did no more than many chriſtian divines have done from the moſt early

Digitized by Google

early ages of the church, no more than we are bound to believe that WHISTON and CLARKE himſelf have done, unleſs we renounce that orthodox profeſſion of faith which all the fathers of the church have held, from thoſe of the nicean council down to Dr. WATERLAND and my good uncle the earl of NOTTINGHAM. How this may be accounted for, I do not preſume to determine, tho' I have ſomewhere or other preſumed to gueſs. But this we may affirm, that, if PLATO had known the method of God's governing the world, his deſign in creating mankind, the original dignity of human nature, the ground and circumſtances of men's preſent corrupt condition, the manner of the divine interpoſition neceſſary to their recovery, and the glorious end to which God intended finally to conduct them *, as well as he knew the ſyſtem of a trinity, of a future judgment, of an heaven, an hell, and a purgatory; he, who is ſo often unintelligible now, would have been vaſtly more ſo. He would have been, therefore, leſs fitted than he was for the bulk and common ſort of mankind, and for the great work of reformation.

SHALL we ſay, finally, that the heathen philoſophers were unequal to this great work, becauſe their doctrines were not enforced by a divine authority? Even this reaſon will prove nothing; for the philoſophers and lawgivers did enforce their doctrines and laws by a divine authority, and call

* Evid. p. 176.

an

an higher principle to the assistance of philosophy and bare reason. ZOROASTER, HOSTANES, the magi, the prophets and seers of Egypt, MINOS, PYTHAGORAS, NUMA, in short, all the fathers of heathen theology, all those who founded or reformed religions and commonwealths, made these pretensions: and their pretensions were admitted. They were impostors: but they passed, in vulgar opinion, for persons divinely inspired and commissioned. Some good they did, but little that was permanent, not because they wanted the opinion of a divine authority for them, but because they employed it absurdly, or because even this opinion was not sufficient.

To what now are we reduced? Since the precepts and motives, offered by the best philosophers, have been never able to reform mankind effectually,* without the assistance of some higher principle, and some divine authority, nor even when both of these have been assumed, may we not be led to think that such a reformation is impracticable? May we not conclude, from the experience of all ages, that no means can bring it about, and those which have been employed less than any? There is a perpetual conflict in the breast of every man, who endeavours to restrain his appetites, to govern his passions, and to make reason, as TULLY expresses it, the law of his life†. Just such a conflict there is between virtue and vice, in the great commonwealth of mankind. If the

* Ibid. p. 198. † Tusc. quaest. ib.

conflict was not maintained by religious and civil inſtitutions, the human ſtate would be intolerable: and tho' it be maintained, as the ſucceſs is various, the ſtate is very imperfect. The method taken to fix this ſucceſs on the right ſide, by calling in artificial theology, has contributed more to ſubdue reaſon than vice and immorality. Reaſon has been laid aſide, natural religion has been no longer ſolely, nor ſo much as directly, concerned in the conteſt. Authority has uſurped the place of one, ſuperſtition of the other: and theſe two have been oppoſed almoſt alone to the torrent of human paſſions, and to the diſorders of mankind, in all the countries of the world; ſo that, wherever philoſophy and reaſon could lift up their heads, they have had the remedy to combat as well as the diſeaſe.

XXVII.

THERE is a country, into the antiquities of which we look further back than into thoſe of any other, and where we may find examples to confirm and illuſtrate what is here ſaid, by comparing the effects of natural religion, unmixed and uncorrupted, with thoſe of artificial theology and ſuperſtition. The country, I mean, is China, whoſe traditions and hiſtories deſerve, at leaſt, as much credit as thoſe of antient nations that have been known to us longer, and which our ſcholars quote with ſo much aſſurance. Now natural religion ſeems to have been preſerved more pure and unmixed in this country, than in any other; and for

a

Digitized by Google

a longer time from that when it was first inhabited, and government was first established in it.* The antient Chinese held it unlawful to dispute about the divine nature, about the attributes of God, the exercise of his power, or the conduct of his providence: and it seems very plain that the concise manner, in which their sages expressed themselves whenever they spoke of the Supreme Being, and upon which their refining successors have endeavoured to found, in part at least, their atheism, proceeded from this modest, this reasonable, and this pious principle. They observed the order of nature, and from thence they deduced all the rules of private morality and public policy. To compare his conduct with the law of heaven and earth,† is the character of a perfect prince, in the works of Confucius. That reason should preside over passion, was the great rule of life, and to walk according to it, was to walk in the great high way of life‡. Thus they were led, by simple and plain reasonings, from the works to the will of God, and to three kinds of moral obligations, to those of an individual, of the member of a family, and of the member of a political society. Bare reason enforced so well the practice of natural religion, by the laws and constitutions of this empire, and the duties of it became so habitual by education and custom, that this people enjoyed, under their two

* Scient. Sinica.

† Confert res a se gestas cum coeli terraeque lege.

‡ Orbis universalis regula, regia humani generis via.

Digitized by Google

firſt imperial families, which continued eleven hundred years, all the bleſſings of public and private virtue that humanity is capable of enjoying. So we muſt underſtand the deſcriptions of this golden age: for tho' the Chineſe lived in a ſtate of innocence and ſimplicity whilſt it laſted, yet as they were ſubject, like other nations, to phyſical evils, ſo may we aſſure ourſelves that they were neither infallible nor impeccable, nor therefore entirely exempt from moral evil. It is enough for the honour of reaſon, and of natural religion, that theſe principles, enforced by civil authority, appear in this inſtance to have anſwered the purpoſes of true religion much better by themſelves, than theſe purpoſes have been ever anſwered by all the expedients, and all the adventitious helps, that philoſophers, legiſlators, and prieſts have deviſed.

WHETHER any other nation afforded an example of the ſame kind, we know not. But this we know, that when other nations begin to appear, they appear already under the influence of abſurd theology and groſs ſuperſtition; and that the Chineſe began in the ſame remote antiquity to fall into the ſame errors, and all the conſequences of them. Under their third imperial family, the affectation of imagining and unfolding myſteries, and of explaining the firſt principles of all things, grew into faſhion amongſt them: and the table of FOHI, or the book Yekim, which is nothing more than a draught of ſixty four figures, compoſed of three hundred and eighty four lines, ſome broken, and

Digitized by Google

and ſome entire, furniſhed to the ſtudious labors of VENVAM and CHEUCUM, and other commentators, as much ſublime knowledge as ever the firſt chapter of Geneſis furniſhed to a profound cabaliſt or whimſical divine. From the various changes, and different combinations, of theſe lines, they proceeded, as PYTHAGORAS did from numbers, and PLATO from immaterial forms and incorporeal eſſences, to erect ſyſtems of natural and moral philoſophy. When they had once departed from ſimplicity and truth, in the ſearch of myſtery, they ſoon imagined themſelves capable of attaining unattainable knowledge: the moſt chimerical paſſed for real, and they boaſted of nothing leſs than to explain the whole ſcheme, order, and ſtate of things. Thus reaſon was abuſed by pretended ſcience, and natural religion was deformed by metaphyſical ſpeculations, and ſuperſtitious devotions.

LI LAO KIUM was a philoſopher of the ſame age with CONFUCIUS, and both of them of the ſame with PYTHAGORAS. Whether the Chineſe and the Samian had the ſame maſters, I know not. But if they had, theſe maſters were rather indian gymnoſophiſts, than hebrew prophets. Several circumſtances incline to think ſo; the dogma, particularly, in the Taoſu, where it is ſaid that the firſt reaſon produced one, one two, two three, and three all things: a jargon very like to that of PYTHAGORAS which DIOGENES LAERTIUS has preſerved, which he and LI LAO KIUM might

Digitized by Google

have learned in India, but which there is no pretence to ſuſpect that the latter could have learned in Paleſtine. The Chineſe taught the ſame moral philoſophy that had been always taught in China, but he took advantage of the metaphyſical folly which prevailed at that time, and which even CONFUCIUS had countenanced, to broach a new and a moſt extravagant theology. He founded it, perhaps, on ſome interpretations of the book Yekim: but however he founded it, he eſtabliſhed it with ſo much ſucceſs that he himſelf was worſhiped at laſt: temples and ſtatues were erected to many of his ſect, all that impoſture could impoſe on credulity was impoſed, natural theology was abominably corrupted, and a ridiculous external ſervice took the place, in great meaſure, of real virtue and true devotion.

THIS ſect prepared the way for another, which had prevailed in India near a thouſand years before our chriſtian æra, but was not introduced into China till ſixty five years after it. This ſect was that of FOE, who raiſed a ſpiritual empire in the eaſt, that has equalled, if not exceeded, all others, under different forms and appellations, in extent and duration. FOE lived in a deſert, under the care of four jogues, or gymnoſophiſts, till he was thirty years old. Then he appeared in the world, aſſumed divinity, and declared himſelf to be the ſaviour of men, for whoſe ſakes he had condeſcended to be born, that he might recover them from their errors, expiate their ſins, and lead them into

Digitized by Google

into the way of being happy hereafter: for he threatened future punishments to those who did not believe in him, nor submit to his doctrines. Voluminous legends of miracles wrought at his birth, and in the course of his life, were published by ten of his disciples. Well might they be voluminous, since his pretended mission lasted nine and forty years: and we may assure ourselves that attestations of them were not wanting, since the number of proselytes he made in that time was immense. They were divided in different classes. To believe implicitely, and to observe the rules of morality, were required from all; and the least credible austerities were practised by some, as they continue to be at this day.

Both these religions are still subsisting in China. What has been the effect of them? The antient laws and customs of the empire are inviolably kept, and good government is maintained by them, independently of these. But are the Chinese grown better men? No. They build monasteries for bonzes, they endow them richly, they adorn their pagods or temples, they prostrate themselves, they pray, they make their offerings, and they burn gilded paper in them; after which they rob or cheat without scruple, and indulge themselves in practices which natural religion abhors the most. There is something worse than this. The true principles of religion being removed, and these fantastic principles placed in lieu of them, the foundation of all religion is sapped at once. They

Digitized by Google

who cannot perſuade themſelves that the religion they ſee practiſed is a ſervice fit to be paid to a Supreme Being, nor conſequently required by any ſuch being, ſlide eaſily from the belief that there is no religion, to the belief that there is no God. This happened in China, where the literati, or learned men, are in truth a ſect of atheiſts, and theiſm ſeems to be the portion of the vulgar alone. Such has been, and is at this day, the effect of artificial theology and ſuperſtitious devotion in that country. The Jeſuits, from whoſe relations, as from the beſt authority in this caſe, I have taken what I have ſaid on the ſubject, pretend that Foe, or Xaca himſelf, gave occaſion to the atheiſm that has been ſince eſtabliſhed, by declaring, before his death, to ſome of his diſciples, his inward doctrine, which tranſpired afterwards. He confeſſed, they ſay, that he had concealed the truth under the veil of types, metaphors, and parables; that vacuity and inanition were the firſt principles of all things, beyond which nothing was to be ſought, becauſe nothing was to be found. What is meaned by the terms that the Jeſuits tranſlate "vacuum et inane," I know not, nor is it worth our while to gueſs. Thus much is plain, the conſequence of refining in matters of religion, beyond the obvious dictates of nature and reaſon, has been ſuperſtition, and enthuſiaſm, or atheiſm, not reformation of manners, in China.

XXVIII.

Digitized by Google

XXVIII.

IF we return now to thoſe countries, with which we are better acquainted, we ſhall find in them much the ſame courſe of things. We ſhall find, indeed natural religion no where eſtabliſhed in it's full extent and purity, as it ſeems to have been once in China. Some firſt principles of it were known and practiſed by people the leaſt civilized, as JUSTIN * repreſents them to have been by the Scythians. No people were wholly ignorant of them, no ſort of government could ſubſiſt without them. But then, as their light ſhone dimly, among theſe half ſavages, through the clouds of a ſuperſtition I ſomewhere called natural, and not improperly, we ſhall find this light actually obſcured, and put out in great part, among the moſt civilized and learned nations. Inſtead of diſpelling theſe clouds, and improving natural religion, they had increaſed by fantaſtic knowledge what ignorance had begun; and we trace the ſame ill conſequences of pretended revelations, and artificial theology, on this ſide the Ganges, as we have traced, on the other, the abominable conſequences which have followed eſtabliſhments made on the ruins of natural religion.

IT is true that the heathen philoſophers were unable to propagate natural religion, and to reform the manners of men effectually. But it is not true that they were ſo for the reaſons CLARKE

* Lib. ii. c. 2.

gives,

Digitized by Google

gives, which have been ſhewn, I think, to be futile and inſufficient. They were ſo for another reaſon principally, which has been touched, and requires to be more fully developed. The reaſon is, that they proceeded, in the doctor's own method, to lay the firſt principles of all religion, and to reaſon from them.

The doctor, whom I cite ſo often becauſe his book is the laſt I have read on this ſubject, and has been received with the greateſt applauſe, repeats over and over, and very dogmatically, ſuch maxims as theſe: "that goodneſs, and juſtice, and all the "moral attributes are the ſame in God, as they are "in our ideas; that the relations, reſpects, and "proportions of things are juſt ſuch as they ap-"pear to be to our underſtandings; that from hence "there reſults a rule, which is the nature and rea-"ſon of things; that this rule is common to God "and man; that it is the law of all his actions in "the government of the world; and that, as it "always determines his will, it ſhould always de-"termine ours." From this aſſumed knowledge of the divine attributes, and of the abſtract nature and reaſon of things, the moſt extravagant opinions concerning the will of God, and the moſt audacious judgments on the conduct and diſpenſations of his providence, have been deduced. How ſhould it be otherwiſe? They who reaſon a poſteriori from the conſtitution of the human ſyſtem, and from the works of God, have indeed a rule to go by, preciſe, invariable, certain. But they who reaſon

Digitized by Google

reaſon a priori from the moral attributes of God, and from the abſtract nature and reaſon of things, have no ſuch rule. Theiſts will concur in aſcribing all poſſible perfections to the Supreme Being: but they will always differ when they deſcend into any detail, and preſume to be particular about them; as they always have differed in their notions of theſe perfections, and conſequently in the application of them. I have ſaid, I believe, already, and I ſhall not recal what is ſaid, agreeably to univerſal and conſtant experience, that the eternal reaſon of things, founded in the conſideration of their abſtract nature, is, for the moſt part, as we ſee it employed by believers and infidels, by the orthodox and the heterodox, nothing better than the reaſon of party, of prejudice, of ſyſtem, and of profeſſion. Yet this is the method which ſome men preſcribe, and which CLARKE * declares to be, of all others, the beſt and cleareſt, the certaineſt and moſt univerſal that the light of nature affords to diſcover the will of God in matters of morality, and to account for the diſpenſations and conduct of his providence. This author goes even further, and the other method is ſtyled by him † a collateral conſideration which may come in aid of the former, nothing more. This other method, however, extends as far as human wants require, and human knowledge can reach. Where it does not extend, the want is imaginary, and the knowledge fantaſtic: and if philoſophers and divines had aimed at

* Evid. p. 119. † Ib.

eſtab-

eſtabliſhing the belief of a Supreme Being, and the duties of natural religion alone, they might, and they would, have been contented with it.

But they meaned ſomething more. They aimed at ſuperiority and fame, at power and riches. He who had never preſumed to define the moral attributes of an all-perfect Being, who contented himſelf to know that ſuch a being exiſted by the neceſſity of his nature, and that his wiſdom and power are infinite; he who had never troubled himſelf about eternal reſpects, relations, and proportions of things, and collected the will, as he collected the exiſtence, of this Being a poſteriori; he, I ſay, knew as much of God, and of his duty to God and man, as natural religion required that he ſhould know. But it was for the intereſt of philoſophers and prieſts, that men ſhould think there was much more to be known; and if thoſe of Egypt had taught nothing more than natural theology, inſtead of theurgic magic, nothing more than the plain duties of religion, inſtead of myſterious rites; it is highly probable the Mercuries would not have been honoured, as they were, in all ſucceeding ages, nor the clergy have poſſeſſed a third part of the whole revenue of the kingdom.

Such as have been mentioned were the principles on which artificial theology aroſe among the heathens: and as the principles were laid neithre in reaſon nor truth, which are always one, it is

Digitized by Google

is no wonder that this theology became as various as error could make it. Some of the motives to invent and embrace it, were ſuch likewiſe as have been mentioned. I ſay ſome; becauſe we may well conceive that when principles, not only falſe, but vague like theſe, had been once adopted by the delirium of metaphyſics, the enthuſiaſm of ſuperſtition, or the prejudices of ignorance, the men who had been accuſtomed to reaſon upon them, and to take for true every thing that uſe had made familiar, might run into the greateſt abſurdities, ſometimes without having any bad motive, nay with a pious intention of promoting true religion, and of attaching men to it by a greater authority, and by greater hopes and fears. This might be the caſe of many, as we ſhall eaſily believe if we conſider what has paſſed in latter days. But however it was brought about, art took every where the place of nature, and faith of reaſon. Artificial theology ſpread far and wide; philoſophers taught it; lawgivers eſtabliſhed it; prieſts improved it: here it was employed to enforce, there it was ſubſtituted to, natural religion: the main principles of it, and even particular opinions, and local inſtitutions, have been variouſly mingled in different ſyſtems, and are to be diſcerned in them even now. This has happened naturally, and almoſt neceſſarily. All theſe ſyſtems lean on certain primitive notions, which the human mind is prone to frame or to receive. The ſame affections and paſſions maintain them, work upon them, and direct them in different imaginations.

Digitized by Google

might be brought to ſhew that it was an Egyptian doctrine before the exode, and this particularly, that it was propagated from Egypt ſo ſoon at leaſt afterwards, by all thoſe who were inſtructed, like Moses, in the wiſdom of that people. He tranſported much of this wiſdom into the ſcheme of religion and government which he gave the Iſraelites; and among other things certain rites, which may ſeem to allude, or have a remote relation, to this very doctrine. Though this doctrine, therefore, had not been that of ABRAHAM, ISAAC, and JACOB, he might have adopted it with as little ſcruple, as he did many cuſtoms and inſtitutions purely Egyptian. He had to do with a rebellious but a ſuperſtitious, people. In the firſt character, they made it neceſſary that he ſhould neglect nothing which might add weight to his ordinances, and contribute to keep them in awe. In the ſecond, their diſpoſition was extremely proper to receive ſuch a doctrine, and to be influenced by it. Shall we ſay that an hypotheſis of future rewards and puniſhments was uſeleſs among a people who lived under a theocracy, and that the future judge of other people was their immediate judge and king, who reſided in the midſt of them, and who dealed out rewards and puniſhments on every occaſion? Why then were ſo many precautions taken? Why was a ſolemn covenant made with God, as with a temporal prince? Why were ſo many promiſes and threatenings of rewards and puniſhments, temporal indeed, but future and contingent, as we find in the book of Deuteronomy,

nomy, moſt pathetically held out by MOSES? Would there have been any more impropriety in holding out thoſe of one kind, than thoſe of another, becauſe the Supreme Being, who diſpoſed and ordered both, was in a particular manner preſent among them? Would an addition of rewards and puniſhments more remote, but eternal, and in all reſpects far greater, to the catalogue, have had no effect? I think neither of theſe things can be ſaid.

WHAT ſhall we ſay then? How came it to paſs this addition was not made? I will mention what occurs to me, and ſhall not be over ſolicitous about the weight that my reflection may deſerve. If the doctrines of the immortality of the ſoul, and of a future ſtate, had been revealed to MOSES, that he might teach them to the Iſraelites, he would have taught them moſt certainly. But he did not teach them. They were, therefore, not revealed to him. Why they were not ſo revealed ſome pert divine, or other, will be ready to tell you. For me, I dare not preſume to gueſs. But this I may preſume to advance, that, ſince theſe doctrines were not revealed by God to his ſervant MOSES, it is highly probable that this legiſlator made a ſcruple of teaching them to the Iſraelites, howſoever well inſtructed he might be in them himſelf, and howſoever uſeful to government he might think them. The ſuperſtitious and idolatrous rites of the Egyptians, like thoſe of other nations, were founded on the polytheiſm and the

Digitized by Google

mythology that prevailed, and were ſuffered to prevail, among the vulgar, and that made the ſum of their religion. It ſeemed to be a point of policy to direct all theſe abſurd opinions and practices to the ſervice of government, inſtead of attempting to root them out. But then the great difference between rude and ignorant nations, and ſuch as were civiliſed and learned like the egyptian, ſeems to have been this, that the former had no other ſyſtem of religion than theſe abſurd opinions and practices, whereas the latter had an inward, as well as an outward, doctrine. There is reaſon to believe that natural theology and natural religion had been taught and practiſed in the antient theban dynaſty; and it is probable that they continued to be an inward doctrine in the reſt of Egypt, whilſt polytheiſm, idolatry, and all the myſteries, all the impieties, and all the follies of magic, were the outward doctrine. Moses might be let into a knowledge of both, and under the patronage of the princeſs, whoſe foundling he was, he might be initiated into thoſe myſteries, where the ſecret doctrine alone was taught, and the outward was exploded. But we cannot imagine that the children of Iſrael, in general, enjoyed the ſame privilege, nor that the maſters were ſo laviſh to their ſlaves of a favor ſo diſtinguiſhed, and often ſo hard to obtain. No. The children of Iſrael knew nothing more than the outſide of the religion of Egypt: and if the doctrine we ſpeak of was known to them, it was known only in the ſuperſtitious rites, and with all the fabulous circum-

Digitized by Google

cumſtances in which it was dreſſed up and preſented to vulgar belief. It would have been hard, therefore, to teach, or to renew this doctrine in the minds of the Iſraelites, without giving them an occaſion the more to recal the polytheiſtical fables, and practiſe the idolatrous rites they had learned during their captivity. Rites and ceremonies are often ſo equivocal, that they may be applied to very different doctrines. But when they are ſo cloſely connected with one doctrine, that they are not applicable to another, to teach the doctrine is, in ſome ſort, to teach the rites and ceremonies, and to authoriſe the fables on which they are founded. MOSES, therefore, being at liberty, to teach this doctrine of rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate, or not to teach it, might very well chuſe the latter; though he indulged the Iſraelites, on account of the hardneſs of their hearts, and by the divine permiſſion, as it is preſumed, in ſeveral obſervances and cuſtoms which did not lead directly, though even they did ſo perhaps in conſequence, to the polytheiſm and idolatry of Egypt. But I return to Greece.

XXX.

THE ſeeds of artificial theology and ſuperſtitious devotion, for they go always together, which ORPHEUS and other egyptian miſſionaries had ſowed, were cultivated by theiſtical philoſophers, and the doctrine of a future ſtate particularly. If PYTHAGORAS reported that the ſoul

Digitized by Google

of HESIOD was tied to a brazen column, and the ſoul of HOMER hung upon a tree, for their temerity in aſcribing human paſſions, and the rules of human conduct even to the father of gods and men, as ſome traditions ſay; one would be tempted to think that he applied this doctrine of a future ſtate to enforce natural religion alone. But we ſhould deceive ourſelves greatly if we thought ſo. We have none of his writings, if he did write. But we know from DIOGENES LAERTIUS, from PORPHYRY, from JAMBLICHUS, and from other authorities, that he imported from Egypt and the eaſtern nations an immenſe ſtock of the theology and ſuperſtition which were in vogue amongſt them. If inſpiration was not the leaſt, it was not the greateſt, of his pretenſions. He inveloped his doctrines in myſtery, to make them paſs for divine, laid the foundations of them out of the ken of human reaſon, and acquired a great reputation in metaphyſics and divine philoſophy, by the uſual method, by not being underſtood.

I PASS to SOCRATES and PLATO. The firſt devoted himſelf to the reformation of his countrymen with unexampled zeal: and as St. PAUL was the apoſtle of the gentiles in revealed, we may ſay that SOCRATES was the ſame in natural, religion. There was greater ſimplicity, and leſs heat of imagination, in the maſter than in the ſcholar. Sober proſe was the language of one. A poetical enthuſiaſm was that of the other. One was fitter to reform his own age by his diſcourſes, the other to excite

Digitized by Google

excite the admiration of posterity by his writings. Good sense and truth served the purpose of one much less, than wit and beauty of style served the purpose of the other. The very extravagancies of PLATO, for which he deserved at least as much as HOMER to be banished out of his own Utopia, recommended him to after-ages; and there have been many, as there are still some, who would say, like TULLY in one of his rants, "errare me-"hercule malo cum PLATONE, quam cum istis vera "sentire." But, notwithstanding the difference I make, and which is true in general, between these philosophers, notwithstanding the accusation which XENOPHON, who took minutes of the discourses of SOCRATES, laid against PLATO for corrupting the doctrine of their common master, it is certain, and XENOPHON himself might be brought to prove, that if SOCRATES did not say every thing which PLATO made him say, yet he lost himself sometimes in clouds of metaphysics, as much as he was afraid to do in those of physics, from whence he has been so much applauded for bringing philosophy down to the affairs of human life, to things of real use, and to knowledge within our reach. How could it be otherwise? SOCRATES was a great reasoner a priori, as well as PLATO, even in the establishment of natural religion. To contemplate God, or the eternal ideas which exist in God, and to abstract the soul from corporeal sense, were soon made, by the encouragement which this school, the senate of philosophy, gave to such theology, the two great objects of it; so

Digitized by Google

that the beſt of theiſtical philoſophers were in effect eunomians, long before that biſhop of Cyzicus lived, who boaſted that he knew God as well as God knew himſelf. Such were the principles of that artificial theology which the Greeks had brought from Egypt and Aſia, which they carried back thither with all their own improvements, which was diſperſed from theſe countries north and ſouth, eaſt and weſt, and in the glare of which men loſt ſight of natural religion.

WHAT philoſophers began, prieſts carried on with no ſmall advantage to themſelves, but without any to religion. I will not ſay, as generally as ſome have done, that they made it no part of their buſineſs to teach the people virtue, nor any thing more than the tricks of religion *, becauſe it is not ſtrictly true, and Mr. LOCKE, in his zeal againſt prieſtcraft, aſſerted a little too much. The ſchools of the philoſophers were indeed the ſchools of morality; but even the tricks of religion had ſome intention to promote it. This only I will ſay, and it is enough. The reformation of mankind was not their principal aim, and the little they did to deter men from vice was done in a method that could not fail to have, as in fact it had, a contrary effect. The obſervation of ceremonies, of feaſts, and ſolemnities that had no foundation in reaſon, and that were arbitrarily preſcribed by eccleſiaſtical diſcipline, tho' ſometimes under the pretence of revelation, were made

* Vid. Reaſonab. of chriſtianity.

the

Digitized by Google

the chief means of pleaſing the gods, and of pacifying them when they were angry. From hence two great miſchiefs aroſe. Religion became form and ceremony, and the obſervation of forms and ceremonies of greater moment than the practice of moral duties, though the practice of theſe was recommended too. This cannot be illuſtrated better than by the example of your church. No one can ſay that ſhe allows men to cheat and to rob one another. On the contrary, ſhe requires that they ſhould be juſt in all their dealings. But yet abſolution for fraud or theft will be obtained from the prieſt, who cannot give it for eating a ſlice of meat on the vigil of ſome ſaint. Thus artificial theology and ſuperſtition oppreſſed true religion, and prieſts found the ſecret of perſuading mankind that God was better pleaſed with obedience to their laws, than to his own.

THUS too ſins were multiplied, and with them the terrors of an incenſed deity. But the ſame prieſts, who ſpread the terrors, ſhewed eaſy means of expiating the ſins that cauſed them. Whereever ſuperſtition prevails, thoſe ſins which the prieſts make, by forbidding what the law of nature has left indifferent, or by impoſing duties that have no relation to true religion, will be always eſteemed the greateſt. Sins, therefore, which are no ſins, may be expiated very properly by puniſhments which are no puniſhments, and ſeveral ceremonies performed may atone for ſeveral omitted. But the abuſe is abominable

Digitized by Google

when the ſame expiations and atonements are applied to real ſins, and prieſts do little elſe than diſpenſe arbitrarily with the laws of nature, which are the laws of God. That no repentance was required in theſe caſes by the pagan divines, I do not ſay. The very forms uſed in the celebration of their myſteries ſeem to ſhew that it was, and that the impenitent could not be initiated. But this very repentance was little, if any thing, more than matter of form, confeſſion, ſome temporary penance, ablutions, purifications, and other tricks of regeneration. Amendment, without theſe, was impracticable or inſufficient; and with theſe, which might be repeated as often as occaſion required, unneceſſary: ſo that Mr. Locke had reaſon to ſay the prieſts ſold good pennyworths. On the whole matter, if men were more powerfully allured to virtue, and deterred from vice, by the hopes and fears of a future ſtate held out to every one in particular, than they could be by the conſequences to mankind, in general, of obſerving or violating natural religion, and by the force of civil laws; yet, in the religions we ſpeak of, one part of the ſyſtem defeated the other. Some body has obſerved, Mezeray I think, that the monſtrous crimes ſo frequent in the devout, that is in the bigot, ages of the chriſtian church, were encouraged by this very devotion. Men were enough bigots to believe that the pardon of God might be obtained for money, or poſſeſſions given to his prieſts, and that crimes of the blackeſt dye might be expiated by undertaking a pilgrimage, in perſon,

Digitized by Google

ſon, or by proxy, to Rome, ad limen apoſtolorum. This traffic, for ſuch it was, became ſo frequent, that, even in times leſs antient, the church of Rome found it neceſſary to publiſh a tariff, or book of rates, which I have ſeen in print,* wherein the price is ſet over againſt every ſin, leſt purchaſers ſhould be impoſed upon; and ſuch ſins are ſpecified, as the moſt polluted imagination would hardly conceive. If this abuſe was not ſo exorbitant in the pagan as in the chriſtian church, ſomething of the ſame kind muſt have been practiſed wherever men were taught to fear an angry God, and to believe, at the ſame time, that they could pacify him with offerings and ſacrifices, or, to uſe an expreſſion of PLATO's, compound with him as they would with an uſurer.

THIS ſingle reaſon will account better for the ſmall progreſs that was made by the heathen philoſophers in reforming mankind, than all thoſe that CLARKE brings. But there is another, and a greater, miſchief ſtill behind. Religion gave occaſion to atheiſm, as dogmatiſm did to ſcepticiſm. Superſtitious worſhip, founded in abſurd opinions concerning the divine nature, had an effect in that age, which I wiſh it had never had ſince. DIAGORAS, for inſtance, might aſſume that ſuch a ſuperſtitious worſhip as he beheld could be paid to fictitious gods alone; and, ſeeing no other worſhip, he might conclude there were no other gods. From the ridiculous worſhip,

* In the late CHARLES BERNARD's library.

and

Digitized by Google

and the abſurd theology that prevailed in all the countries they knew, both he, and THEODORUS, who lived more than twenty olympiads after him, and many more avowed or concealed atheiſts, might draw the ſame concluſions, and be mad enough not to diſcern that a few local obſervations were not ſufficient to invalidate a propoſition that might be true independently of them, and that there might be a God, and a true worſhip of him, tho' all the gods of Greece were fictitious, and the adoration of them was mere ſuperſtition,

THESE men were plunged at once, and by indignation, as it were, into atheiſm; whilſt others went into it by dint of philoſophical refinements more leiſurely, leſs directly, and ſome of them againſt the primitive doctrines of their own ſchools.

XXXI.

LET us conſider what happened in the academy, and what the conſequence was of all that metaphyſical theology which the founder of it was ſuppoſed, by his immediate ſucceſſors, and by other philoſophers, to have taught dogmatically. If SPEUSIPPUS, XENOCRATES, CRATES, CRANTOR, and POLEMO, did not teach exactly the ſame dogmas, they taught on the ſame principles of chimerical knowledge that their founder had done; and, in this ſenſe, it might be ſaid, quae acceperant tuebantur. Other ſects of dogmatiſts aroſe

at

at the ſame time, and among the reſt one which gave a principal occaſion to that revolution in the academy which ARCESILAUS began, and CARNEADES improved. The ſect, I mean, was that of the Stoics, concerning whom it is true to ſay, that their theology and their moral philoſophy were alike abſurd. By one they drew the divinity down to be a ſort of plaſtic, intelligent, fiery nature. By the other, they ſtrained their notions of human wiſdom and virtue ſo high, that man was obliged to God for neither: he gave them to himſelf, and God and man were in theſe reſpects nearly on a level.

ZENO, who founded the Portic, had been an auditor in the academy, and was accuſed of pirating his philoſophy from the leſſons of XENOCRATES and POLEMO, when he ſet up his ſchool as a rival to the other. POLEMO had taught that the world was God, for inſtance; and ZENO had adopted this among other extravagancies. When the conteſt ran high between him and ARCESILAUS, the latter ſaw by this inſtance, and by many, that he lay under a double diſadvantage. He had the doctrines of his own ſchool to defend; and it was no eaſy taſk to defend, by reaſon, a ſyſtem of imagination. His adverſaries had often the authority of his own ſchool, and of the founder of it, to urge againſt him, when he attacked them even in their weakeſt parts. He changed, therefore, his method of philoſophiſing. No matter whether he did it, as LUCULLUS ſays, by introducing

Digitized by Google

ducing a new one, or, as CICERO affirms,* by reviving and avowing the old one. When the maxim was eſtabliſhed, that nothing could be known, "nihil cognoſci, nihil percipi, nihil ſciri "poſſe," the academicians could always attack, and never be attacked. This I take to have been the political ſecret of ARCESILAUS. But whatever his ſecret was, he eſtabliſhed ſcepticiſm: and SOCRATES and PLATO had given him but too much reaſon to make it the academical principle. As there was little difference, except in name, between the ſecond and third academy, ſo there was little, that it is eaſy or worth our while to aſcertain, between this ſect, and another founded about the ſame time by that melancholy madman PYRRO. One acknowledged probability; both denied certainty.

THE Pyrrhonian is againſt all ſides; and all ſides are againſt him. He is a common enemy, "hoſtis philoſophici generis." The academician would paſs, if he could, for a neuter, who is for no ſide, nor againſt any; or elſe for a trimmer, who changes ſides often, and finds the probable ſometimes on one, ſometimes on the other. TULLY, moſt of whoſe works are come down to us, is a ſtanding portrait in our ſight of the true academician. In his Academical queſtions he oppoſes to LUCULLUS the variety and the repugnancy of all the philoſophical ſyſtems. In his books about

* In academ.

the

Digitized by Google

the nature of the gods, he makes COTTA oppoſe the Epicureans and the Stoicians both in their turns. The concluſion is always againſt embracing any of theſe ſyſtems: and ſo far doubtleſs he concluded well. But here lay the error. When he aſſented to the probability of ſome, and to the certainty of no propoſition whatever, he confounded truth with falſehood, as LUCULLUS objects to him that he did; juſt as much as the ſect of LUCULLUS, or any other dogmatiſts, who put every thing they advanced into the ſame claſs of certainty. The Stoicians would have aſſented to this propoſition, "it is now light in a full ſunſhine," with the ſame aſſurance, and with no more than they would have aſſented at any other time to this, "the world is "a wiſe being." Such has been the dogmatical impertinence, for it deſerves this name, of all thoſe in every age, and in every ſect of philoſophy or religion, who have imagined they could impoſe by authority, or who have had the affectation of framing, complete ſyſtems concerning the univerſal order and ſtate of things, divine and human. It is this practice which has laid the men who ſubmitted to it under a ſort of intellectual tyranny, and which has driven thoſe, who have not ſubmitted to it, into a ſort of intellectual anarchy. The fault of all lies at the door of the dogmatiſt; for there is in ſcience, as there is in government, a middle between tyranny and anarchy, far better than either of them. I will explain myſelf by two examples: and they ſhall be very modern, that the antients may not bluſh alone.

ONE

ONE of the CROZATS, a family well known at Paris, went to take his leave of CLEMENT the eleventh, before he returned from Rome. The holy father aſked, whether he had finiſhed his purchaſe of a certain collection of paintings? CROZAT anſwered, that he had not; that there were ſeveral obſcene pieces in the collection, and that the confeſſors in his country would not allow him to keep them. The pope reflected on this occaſion, with no ſmall concern, on the number of Janſeniſts, who teach a more rigid morality, and who abound in the church of France. However, ſaid the pontiff, you might conclude your purchaſe, becauſe it would be eaſy to ſell ſuch of thoſe paintings, as your confeſſor would not ſuffer you to keep. CROZAT replied, that the ſame confeſſors, who would not ſuffer him to keep them, would as little permit him to ſell them, and thereby contribute to the ſin of another. CLEMENT ſmiled at the ſcruple, and propoſed an expedient. Though your confeſſor, ſaid his holineſs, ſhould object, if you ſold theſe pictures to catholics, he could have no objection to make, if you ſold them to heretics, to the Engliſh for inſtance. That is, the Engliſh neither believe in me, nor in any thing like me; they had, therefore, as good believe in nothing: they are, therefore, damned; and a ſin the more will do none of them any great harm.

THE other example ſhall be that of a better divine perhaps than the pope, but of as great a dogmatiſt.

Digitized by Google

matiſt. CLARKE undertook to demonſtrate not only the being and attributes of God, and the obligations of natural religion, by reaſon; but even the truth and certainty of chriſtian revelation. Now the latter of theſe being his ultimate view, it was neceſſary that he ſhould prove the two firſt in ſuch a manner, and by ſuch arguments, as were not always the beſt and moſt perſuaſive, but were the fitteſt to demonſtrate, on pretended grounds of reaſon, ſuch a ſcheme, order, and ſtate of things as were agreeable to chriſtian revelation, and to the received principles of the church. If he could not carry reaſon with him throughout, he reſolved to carry ſome appearances of it: and for that purpoſe he argues in ſuch a manner, and attempts to eſtabliſh ſuch notions from the firſt, as he flattered himſelf would ſecure theſe appearances to him on every part of his ſubject, aſſiſted with all the ſkill, all the ſubtilty, and all the plauſibility, he was able to employ. When he is to prove that the firſt cauſe is an intelligent cauſe, without which he had proved in effect nothing, he has recourſe to arguments a poſteriori. There are, indeed, no others, and he owns as much: for which reaſon he might have been more favourable to them, than I have obſerved already that he was. But he could not have eſtabliſhed by them ſome things, that he hoped to eſtabliſh by the others, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew more fully when I come to vindicate providence againſt the joint accuſations of atheiſts and divines. All that I mean, and that is to my purpoſe to obſerve here, is this. A neceſ-

ſary

ſary connection between the natural and moral attributes of God, no man, who believes in him, will deny: all the perfections of an all-perfect Being muſt be conſiſtent and connected; to be otherwiſe would be imperfection. Divines, therefore will have nothing on this head with which to reproach any true atheiſt: and they had beſt take care that the true theiſt has no juſt occaſion to reproach them for ſetting theſe attributes at variance, as he might have, if he followed the rule CLARKE quotes from TULLY *, and conſidered the conſequences of their opinions, without regarding what they affirm, nor how honourably they may ſeem to ſpeak of ſome particular attributes of God †. But that which may be reproached to CLARKE, and for which I produce his example, is, that when he has aſſerted juſtice, and goodneſs, and the reſt of the moral attributes, to be in God juſt what they are in our imperfect, unſteady, complex ideas; when he has aſſerted that the rule, according to which God exerciſes theſe attributes, the nature and reaſon of things reſulting from the fitneſs and unfitneſs of their relations, is obvious to the underſtandings of all intelligent beings; and when he has rather repeated theſe bold propoſitions over and over than proved them (for how ſhould he prove them?) he triumphs in this fooliſh and wicked rhodomontade, that the man who denies

* Quaſi ego id curem quid ille aiat aut neget: illud quaero quid ei conſentaneum ſit dicere. De fin. l. ii.

† Evid. p. 22.

the

the moral attributes, such as he makes them to be, for moral attributes, in general, are not concerned, may be reduced to a necessity of denying the natural likewise, and consequently into absolute atheism. Your pope pretends to make universal and infallible decrees in matters of religion; our doctor infallible demonstrations: and both of them send every one to the devil who does not believe in them, and in all cases like them.

XXXII.

THOUGH I do not believe PLATO to have been a dogmatist, even when he appears such, on the faith of St. AUSTIN, any more than I believe ARCESILAUS to have disguised his real sentiments, and to have continued a dogmatist, even when he avowed scepticism, on the faith of the same saint, or of a passage in SEXTUS EMPIRICUS; yet must it be owned that SOCRATES and he laid the foundation of a metaphysical dogmatism, which the latter Pythagoricians and Platonicians revived long afterwards, and which prevails to this day. It was a maxim of theirs, that we may have knowledge concerning things perceptible by intellect, but opinion only concerning things perceptible by sense; and it was on the strength of this maxim, perhaps, that the former, after he had brought philosophy down from the clouds, went up thither again to find the principles of morality, and the rules of human life. Whether we pretend, like those philosophers, to contemplate immaterial forms, and

Digitized by Google

the eternal ideal architypes that exiſt in God, or whether we aſſert that all the relations of things appear to us what they are abſolutely and neceſſarily in themſelves, there is an infallible, though human, criterion eſtabliſhed, to which, ſays CLARKE, and he quotes the bible for it, even God himſelf appeals.

FROM ſuch knowledge as this, knowledge which no man ever had, or could have, the whole ſyſtem of artificial theology, which corrupted natural religion, was deduced. It ſerved in no ſort to promote the reformation of mankind, and it involved the profeſſors of it in a thouſand difficulties and diſputes that rendered them ridiculous to one another, and every one perhaps to himſelf, unleſs there were ſome as enthuſiaſtical and as mad in thoſe days as PLOTINUS, PORPHYRY, JAMBLICHUS, and others grew to be, after the beginning of chriſtianity. Thus it came about that the great theological, that is, the platonic, ſchool went from one extreme into another. It ſuited the vanity of theſe philoſophers better to aſſert that nothing was to be known in general, than to own that the reputation of their ſchool in particular had been raiſed on a fantaſtic ſcience: and after exerciſing their wit to prove that they were maſters of divine knowledge, they exerciſed it to prove that they knew nothing, no not the exiſtence of a Supreme Being.

THE truth is, that the philoſophy of the academy became little more than an exerciſe of wit and elo-

Digitized by Google

eloquence. TULLY purges himself, in one place, from the imputation of engaging in the academical sect on these motives, or on that of loving to dispute *; and yet he confesses, in the second Tusculan, that the custom of disputing on every side pleased him, because it was "maxima dicendi "exercitatio." But whatever engaged him in it, his engagements carried him very far, as we may see in his books Of the nature of the gods. I cite these, because they serve extremely to my purpose, which is to shew, by contrasting the Stoicians and the Academicians together (for the Epicureans cannot have their place here, though they too were dogmatists) how unfit the philosophers of both these schools were, from very opposite causes and different extremes, to establish the fundamental principle of true religion, or indeed to establish any thing. The discourse of BALBUS is a rhapsody of sense and nonsense, of very good arguments a posteriori that there is a God, "esse ali-"quod numen praestantissimae mentis," of sophistical syllogisms to prove the same thing a priori, and of idle traditions, gravely produced to confirm the whole by fact as well as reason. All this he advances with equal assurance, the weak and the strong, the false and the true. BALBUS could do no otherwise. He had the task of explaining and defending artificial, not natural, theology; superstition, not religion. He was obliged, therefore,

* Ostentatione aliqua . . . aut studio certandi.

Digitized by Google

as all they are whoſe ultimate end is error, to proceed from the firſt on principles ill aſſumed, to reaſon falſely, and to conclude precariouſly, but dogmatically. The diſcourſe of COTTA is an ingenious declamation, wherein he refutes the ſtoical ſyſtem, and renders it ridiculous. But then he diſputes ſo vehemently againſt it, and his arguments extend ſo far, that TULLY * makes his own brother accuſe the pontiff directly, and himſelf by conſequence indirectly, of atheiſm. "Studio "contra ſtoicos differendi, deos mihi videtur funditus tollere." What ſays TULLY in his own name? He tells his brother that COTTA diſputes in that manner, rather to confute the Stoics, than to deſtroy the religion of mankind "... magis ... "quam ut hominum deleat religionem." But QUINTUS anſwers, that is, TULLY makes him anſwer, he was not the bubble of an artifice, employed to ſave the appearance of departing from the public religious inſtitutions, "ne communi "jure migrare videatur." When you join to this ſhort converſation, the expreſſion, which concludes the third book Of the nature of the gods, where TULLY ſays very drily, that the diſputation of BALBUS ſeemed to him the moſt probable, "ad "veritatis ſimilitudinem propenſior," you will ſee that, if the academicians did not profeſs atheiſm, becauſe they could profeſs nothing, yet ſome of them might eſteem this to be the moſt probable opinion, as TULLY eſteemed that of theiſm to be, even when the abſurdities of the portic were blended

* De Divin. l. i.

with

Digitized by Google

with it or deduced from it. Thus doubt concerning the exiſtence of any ſuperior Being aroſe in the ſame ſchool, from which ſo much artificial theology had been propagated: and the ſublime doctrines of the divine PLATO ended in arrant ſcepticiſm, as they led to it, and as he deſigned they ſhould, if the man in the world who admired him the moſt, who ſeemed to have lived with him, and who would rather have erred with him, than have been in the right with others, all which are TULLY's own profeſſions, knew him better than St. AUSTIN or any modern pedant.

XXXIII.

THESE firſt and crude reflections may be ſufficient to ſhew that the heathen philoſophers were not unable to reform mankind, for the reaſons given by Dr. CLARKE, but for reaſons of a very different kind. I might even have ſaved myſelf the trouble perhaps of deſcending into ſo many particulars; ſince it would have been not only an anſwer ad hominem, but a full anſwer to all that can be urged in favor of the ſame hypotheſis, to have aſked, whether the reformation, which heathen philoſophers could not bring about effectually, has been effected under the jewiſh and chriſtian diſpenſations? Under theſe, all the knowledge, and all the means, which are aſſumed to be neceſſary, and to have been deficient in the ſtate of paganiſm, as well as ſome means really wanting to the philoſophers, were amply ſupplied.

Digitized by Google

Consider judaiſm as a religion given by God himſelf, in the moſt oſtenſible manner, to a people whom he choſe to be his peculiar people, whom he ſeparated from the reſt of mankind, and with whom he made a ſolemn covenant. Conſider the whole ſeries of miracles, that were wrought to convince, to perſuade, to aſſiſt and defend, to reward and to puniſh, this people occaſionally. Add to all this, that God exerciſed kingly power amongſt them for a time, and that the Shecinah, or his divine preſence over the mercy-ſeat, continued amongſt them till the deſtruction of their firſt temple. Conſider this, and then conſider that their hiſtory is little elſe than a relation of their rebelling and repenting, of their proneneſs to one, and of the extreme difficulty with which they were drawn, even by ſupernatural means, to the other. Conſider that theſe rebellions were not thoſe of particular men, ſurpriſed and hurried into diſobedience by their paſſions, but national deliberate violations of the law and defiances of the Supreme Being. Is it poſſible that any one, who believes the hiſtory of the bible true, ſhould believe, after he has read it, that the want of a divine authority, and of a principle higher than reaſon, hindered the heathen philoſophers from reforming the world effectually; that they would have ſucceeded, if they had really had them, as they ſometimes pretended to them; and that, for this reaſon, which they were ſagacious enough to diſcover, they deſired and expected a revelation? Surely it is impoſſible.

The

Digitized by Google

THE Jews had not ſuch continual and immediate communications with God by their high prieſt and their prophets, after their return from the babylonian captivity, as before it; neither were they eye-witneſſes of ſuch frequent manifeſtations of his glory and power, as their fathers had been: and yet what a reformation, in point of religion, was wrought among them after the reeſtabliſhment of their church and ſtate? How much more zealouſly and ſteadily were they attached to their law? This difference was owing, no doubt, to the inſtitution of ſynagogues in every place where a congregation of ten perſons could be aſſembled, and to other improvements of their eccleſiaſtical diſcipline and worſhip, which had a wonderful effect on the ſpirit of the people, raiſed it to enthuſiaſm, but preſerved it orthodox. SOCRATES and PLATO then, to quote no others of the heathen philoſophers, might have had the ſame ſucceſs in reforming the manners of men, and in reſtoring the purity of natural religion at Athens, without any divine miſſion, that ESDRAS and NEHEMIAS had at Jeruſalem in reviving and improving more effectually the ceremonies and obſervances of judaiſm, by means which experience and good policy ſuggeſted to them, if the two Greeks had been, as the two Jews were, the legiſlators and ſecond founders of their commonwealth.

THERE is ſo little pretence to draw the ſhadow of an argument from the ineffectual endeavours

Digitized by Google

of the heathen philoſophers to reform the world, that the world has not been effectually reformed, nor any one nation in it, even by the promulgation of the goſpel, even where chriſtianity has floriſhed moſt in ſpeculation and external devotion. The Son of God, God himſelf, came upon earth, was born of a woman, lived among men, preached a new covenant, wrought miracles, ſent his diſciples to all nations, who eſtabliſhed his church among them. What has happened? This church has been ſo far from reforming mankind, that it ſtood in need of being itſelf reformed as ſoon as it was eſtabliſhed. The gates of hell have not yet prevailed againſt it, and we are to believe that they never will. But the gates of hell have ſhook it extremely in all ages, and the prince of hell has made, from the firſt, moſt terrible incurſions within the pale of it. Much zeal has been expreſſed about articles of faith, much regard has been paid to the outward ſervice of God; and wealth, and power, and pomp, and dignity have been laviſhly beſtowed on an order of men, who affect to be thought ſucceſſors to the apoſtles, and whoſe inſtitution is avowedly directed to reform the manners of men, as well as to preſerve the purity of faith. Every defect, except that of not living up to their doctrines, which is ſuppoſed to have rendered the preachers of natural religion incapable of reforming the world, has been ſupplied in the preachers of revealed religion. The doctrines of theſe men have been certainly enforced by a divine authority: and they

Digitized by Google

they have been assisted by an higher principle than philosophy and bare reason. They had antiently all the advantages of opposition and persecution. They have enjoyed ever since, and during a course of fourteen centuries, all those of support and of favour from civil government, and of blind submission from the people. With all these advantages they have not wrought a more effectual reformation. Morality has not been better taught by them, nor better practised under their influence. On the contrary, having united in themselves the two characters of philosophers and priests, they have often sacrificed the former to the latter, not for the sake of revealed religion, which is founded on natural, and can require no such sacrifice; but, like the priests of paganism, for the sake of their craft.

Examples will be brought, I know, in opposition to what is here advanced. Examples of a religious zeal, which prevailed among all the primitive christians to such a degree, that though some of them declined, many of them courted, martyrdom; examples of particular men, who have deserved a sort of apotheosis for the purity of their doctrines and the sanctity of their lives: and examples, on the other hand, of pagan ferocity and cruelty, contrasted with christian moderation and charity. It would not be hard, but it would be a long and invidious task, to shew, in a variety of instances, how partially these examples are produced, and these comparisons are made. Let us be content with a few general reflections.

That

THAT a religious and enthuſiaſtical zeal animated many of the primitive chriſtians, both the orthodox and the heretics, is moſt certain. But to make the example prove what it is deſigned to prove, this zeal ſhould have been ſingular, a peculiar effect of chriſtian revelation: whereas nothing is, nor has been ever, more common. The zeal of the Jews, whilſt they lived in the midſt of revelations, and miracles, was not comparable to that which they ſhewed when they had nothing but the fooliſh comments of their miſhnical doctors, inſtead of one, and enthuſiaſtical viſions and ſuperſtitious ſigns inſtead of the other. We ſhall find the ſame if we go for examples to many of the pagan nations. We ſhall find not only particular men, but whole bodies of men, among them, as well as among Chriſtians, ready to devote themſelves to death, not only for their abſurd religions, but for their attachment to a party, or to the moſt whimſical point of imaginary honour. It is not much to that of revelation, therefore, to aſcribe to it what may be the effect of impoſture and error: and enthuſiaſm is no more a proof of true religion, than martyrdom is of a good cauſe.

THE examples of men, reputed ſaints for the purity of their doctrine and the holy auſterity of their lives, will avail as little to ſhew that the chriſtian revelation reformed the world any more, than the endeavours of heathen philoſophers. Their

Digitized by Google

Their doctrines, the doctrines of these saints I mean, were such as related either to the metaphysical speculations of theology, and to the practice of ceremonies and rites established for outward worship and ecclesiastical discipline, or to moral obligations and the duties of natural religion. About the first, and second, it must be confessed that the pastors of the church were in those days, as they are in ours, extremely intent. But the disputes that arose among them, on all such occasions, and the scandal with which they were carried on by all sides, leave it very doubtful to whom this purity is to be ascribed; and much more probable that it was to be ascribed to none. It seems that no side had a good claim to it, in many cases, whilst the disputes lasted. When they were determined by councils, however this determination was procured, a standard of purity was assumed to be fixed; and authority did what neither reason nor revelation could do, it ascertained orthodoxy in belief and practice, till new disputes arose, or till old ones were revived. These doctrines and these rites have been so far from reforming the world, that they have promoted, by the disputes raised about them, more hatred, malice, and uncharitableness, than ever was in it before. They have diminished the flames neither of ambition nor avarice. They have added fresh fuel to them, and have kindled new flames of their own. In short, the examples of these saints, with respect to these doctrines, will never prove the utility of revelation: and with

with reſpect to thoſe that regard moral obligations, and the duties of natural religion, they either neglected them, or taught them more imperfectly than ſeveral of the heathen philoſophers. When I ſay that they neglected them, this I mean: The theology contained in the goſpel lies in a very narrow compaſs. It is marvellous, indeed, but it is plain: and it is employed, throughout, to enforce natural religion. This ſeems to be the end, and revealed religion the means; both which it would have been for the honour of chriſtianity and for the good of mankind to have left ſo. But the ſaints, that have been quoted, took another courſe from the firſt. Inſtead of making theology, and the external duties of religion, ſerve as means, they inſiſted on them as if knowledge in metaphyſics, ceremony, and eccleſiaſtical dominion had been the principal ends of revelation. They inſiſted on them ſo conſtantly and ſo voluminouſly, that natural religion held but the ſecond place in their ſyſtem, and that righteouſneſs of faith became much more important than righteouſneſs of works. On this account we may ſay that they neglected, in ſome ſort, the doctrines of natural religion: they practiſed them ill, and they could ſcarce fail to teach them both imperfectly and erroneouſly; ſince they derived them, a priori, from principles of their own theology, and from the ideas they framed of the divine attributes, inſtead of deriving them, a poſteriori, from the conſtitution of the human ſyſtem. To this we muſt aſcribe the wild allegories, with which

Digitized by Google

which they perplexed the plaineſt dictates of reaſon, the affected refinements, which are impracticable in any national ſociety, and the immoral doctrines which ought to have been baniſhed, with the ſaints who taught them, out of all ſocieties. The charge I bring is not that of paſſion, nor prejudice, no, nor of ignorance. I am able to juſtify it in all it's parts, by ſome inſtances: and if you would ſee it made good by more, and by more learned authorities, conſult ſuch writers as BARBEYRAC, who was provoked by a ſaucy monk to publiſh his book, La moralité des peres. Conſult other critics, of whom there are many. Nay, conſult the authors who deny this charge: and I will appeal to your judgment on what you find even in them, provided you weigh the facts in the balance of common ſenſe, and pay no regard to their judgments.

THUS much for purity of doctrine. Much leſs needs to be ſaid about holineſs and auſterity of life. The hiſtories of ſaints have been in all religions, even more than thoſe of any other eminent perſons, little better than panegyrical romances. The reaſon of which is obvious enough: No man, for inſtance, is ſo ſilly, I preſume, at this time, unleſs he be a roſicrucian, as to give any more credit to the biographers of the egyptian hermits, ANTONY and PAUL, than to thoſe of PYTHAGORAS and APPOLLONIUS of Thyana. All their relations are ſtuffed alike with the moſt evident falſehoods, the moſt puerile abſurdities, and

Digitized by Google

and the groſſeſt ſuperſtitions: for many of theſe were common to Pagans, Jews, and Chriſtians: and yet the firſt of the biographers I mention, who yield in none of theſe reſpects to PORPHYRY, JAMBLICHUS, PHILOSTRATUS, or any other compiler of lying legends, were famous ſaints, ATHANASIUS and JEROM. But further: if we allow the ſanctity and auſterity of ſome particular men, or of ſome particular orders of men, to have been, and to be, as great as they are repreſented, this will be far from proving the reformation of the world by chriſtianity. There were antiently, among the heathens, chaldeans, gymnoſophiſts, and others; and there are now, both among them and the Mahometans, particular men, and orders of men, of great ſanctity of life, nay of greater than any among chriſtians: if ſanctity be to be meaſured, as they who would make the objection I anſwer meaſure it, by auſterity. It is unneceſſary to quote the inſtances, which are to be found in all our books of travels. Even SIMEON STYLYTES, who ſtood faſting and praying on the top of a column ſo many years together, has been outdone by multitudes. What now can be ſaid? If theſe examples are not ſufficient to prove that heathen philoſophers and mahometan doctors have reformed the world, will examples of the ſame, or of an inferior, kind prove that chriſtianity has?

IT will not be ſaid, I think, that luxury and debauchery have been reſtrained by chriſtianity.

Digitized by Google

It was a proverbial saying, "Daphnicis moribus "vivere:" and CASSIUS, if I remember right, would not suffer his army to encamp at Antioch, lest his soldiers should be corrupted by the manners of the place. But where is the court or city, in which christianity is professed, to which this phrase might not be applied? I know of none: nor is there any good reason to believe there was any such antiently, neither that of CONSTANTINE, whatever his panegyrist advances, nor that of CHARLEMAGNE, tho' your church has thought fit for other reasons to make saints of both these princes. Upon this, therefore, divines will be ashamed to insist, or may be easily made so: since it is not difficult to shew them, that the men of their own order, who did not mend their manners afterwards, were famous even in the fourth century for following those of Daphne. But it will be sounded high, that the patience, moderation, and charity, which christianity inspires, softened the turbulent, fierce, and cruel temper of paganism; and wrought, by doing this, a wonderful reformation in the world. You must remember that this fact has been asserted to be undeniable, and yet it is false: the very contrary is true. CONSTANTINE did, I believe, expect that the establishment of the christian religion in the empire would have this effect. But his expectation proved vain: and I might appeal to the ecclesiastical and civil history of the last fourteen hundred years, that is, from his days to ours, to vouch for me. The whole tenor of them proves that revolts against govern-

Digitized by Google

government, and diſorders of every kind, have been at leaſt as frequent in the chriſtian world as in the pagan. There were never more, nor more unjuſt, nor more cruel, wars, than Chriſtians have waged: and the perſecutions and maſſacres, that may be reproached to them, are ſuch, in all circumſtances of inhumanity, as can be reproached to no other people, except the Jews. That any part of theſe evils ought to be aſcribed to goſpel-chriſtianity, I neither ſay nor believe. They cannot be reconciled to the principles of it. But this I ſay, and believe, that the chriſtian revelation has not effectually reformed the world. There never was in itſelf a more riſible, nor in it's conſequences a more lamentable, abſurdity impoſed on mankind than this, that a certain order of men ſhould be inſtituted, not only to preſide in the exerciſes of public worſhip, and to exhort others to the practice of their known duties; but to think for the reſt, and to dictate opinions to them on matters of nice ſpeculation, concerning which they themſelves were never agreed, and which have no immediate connection with theſe known duties. This abſurdity, however, has prevailed in the chriſtian, as in other religions of poſitive inſtitution: and in this, as in them, the ſpirit of the clergy has become the ſpirit of the religion. They, who ſhould have preached concord, have preached diſcord; and they, who ſhould have promoted peace, have animated to war. They have given continual pretence to ferocity and cruelty; they have often irritated them above their

Digitized by Google

their uſual exceſſes: and the profane application of a ſcrap* of the goſpel has ſerved to deluge whole nations in blood. A private opinion, however true, that was not exactly conformable to an eccleſiaſtical deciſion, was termed hereſy; and againſt ſuch hereſy, as againſt the greateſt of crimes, the paſſions of men were inflamed under the name of zeal.

THOUGH I avoid to deſcend into particulars, let me juſt compare natural ferocity and cruelty with religious, by mentioning one example of the former, and two of the latter. The barbarous people, who broke into the roman empire, had no motives but thoſe of plundering wealthy provinces, and ſettling in better climates. Religion was ſo far from being a motive to theſe enterpriſes, that they embraced generally that of the nations they conquered. They were guilty, no doubt, of great violence and cruelty: but when you have read the moſt exaggerated accounts of their proceedings, read thoſe, which are contained in the Bible, of the invaſion of Paleſtine, and thoſe which Spaniſh authors themſelves give of the invaſion of America. Theſe events, that happened at an immenſe diſtance of time, and were brought about under very different economies of religion and policy, are, therefore, the more proper to ſhew how religion may furniſh a pretence to natural ferocity and cruelty, as well as aggra-

* Compel them to come in.

Digitized by Google

vate both; and that it has always done ſo either by it's own ſpirit, as in the caſe of judaiſm, or by that of it's teachers, as in the caſe of chriſtianity. When the Iſraelites marched to the conqueſt of Canaan, the ark and the prieſts marched before them. An antient promiſe, which God made to ABRAHAM, when he made that covenant with him which was the foundation of their religion, was the foundation of the juſtice of this expedition: and the immediate commands of God were urged to authoriſe ſuch extirpations of people, as no other hiſtory can parallel, as it is impoſſible to read without horror, as were unneceſſary to give them a ſecure poſſeſſion of the country, and as neither this reaſon, nor any other, could excuſe. When the Spaniards ſailed to the conqueſt of America, ſilver and gold were their objects, but the propagation of the goſpel was their pretence. That wretch, pope ALEXANDER the ſixth, made them a donation of an entire hemiſphere: and prieſts and monks were ſent, that they might add the fury of bigotry to that of avarice.

I MIGHT reſt the matter here, having ſaid enough to ſhew how falſe and trifling the argument is, which CLARKE endeavours to draw from an incapacity in the heathen philoſophers, both for want of knowledge, which was not, and for want of other means, which was, their caſe, to reform mankind, and from the aſſumed ſufficiency of revelation alone to produce this effect. But

I

Digitized by Google

I chuſe to wind up the whole, by deſiring you to retrace, in your mind, the progreſs made in ſociability, civility, and every moral virtue, in the heathen republics of Greece and Rome, before and ſince the chriſtian revelation. Authors may declaim as much as they pleaſe, to aggravate particular vices, and to take off from the luſtre of particular virtues; they will perſuade no man, who reads and judges for himſelf, that the practice of piety and virtue has increaſed among the Greeks, from the time of CONSTANTINE downwards, under the influence of chriſtian paſtors, as it did, under the influence of heathen philoſophers and legiſlators, from the time when THUCYDIDES repreſents them like lawleſs ſavages who went pirating and raviſhing about, to the days when Athens and Sparta flouriſhed. As little will the ſame authors perſuade that the diſtance in virtue, between that rout of ſhepherds and outlaws who formed a ſtate under ROMULUS, and the citizens of Rome in the beſt ages of that commonwealth, was not vaſtly greater than any improvement of the ſame kind, that was made among them from the time that Rome became chriſtian.

IF it appears now to be true in fact that neither reaſon nor revelation, neither heathen nor chriſtian philoſophers, neither human nor divine laws, have been able to reform the manners of men effectually; may we not, nay muſt we not, conclude that ſuch a reformation is inconſiſtent

Digitized by Google

with the original conſtitution of the human ſyſtem? Muſt we not conclude that appetites, paſſions, and the immediate objects of pleaſure, will be always of greater force to determine men than reaſon, and the more remote object, as well as complicated notion, of happineſs? Such is the imperfect ſtate in which we are placed; a ſtate wherein the vice and virtue of our moral, like the good and evil of our phyſical, world prevail in their turns, and are often at the beſt, and in the moſt favourable circumſtances, but equally balanced on the whole. Why there is ſuch a ſtate as this, and how to reconcile it to the ideas of holineſs and goodneſs, let thoſe men enquire, who ſay that God appeals to man, who take him at his word, and preſume to judge him accordingly. But let you and I pronounce, that ſince there is ſuch a ſtate as this in the univerſal ſyſtem, it was fit and right that there ſhould be ſuch a ſtate. On this head we may, we ought to be dogmatical.

XXXIV.

WHAT has been here laid down is ſo far from making natural, or revealed religion, or any means that tend to the reformation of mankind, unneceſſary, that it makes them all more neceſſary. Since our ſtate is ſo imperfect; ſince it is ſo hard to keep the virtues that are intimately connected with the happineſs, and the vices that are intimately connected with the miſery, of mankind,

Digitized by Google

kind, even on a balance; nothing ſhould be neglected that may give the advantage to the former, by enforcing moral obligations and all the doctrines of natural religion. As nothing ſhould be neglected, ſo nothing may ſeem in ſpeculation ſo proper to this purpoſe, as a true revelation, or a revelation believed to be true: and if experience has not confirmed ſpeculation in the caſe of a revelation we believe to be true, if chriſtianity, which has enforced natural religion in ſome reſpects, has corrupted it in others, the maxim may ſtill remain unſhook. The natural, the genuine effect of the goſpel has been defeated and perverted, and much has been done towards leſſening the authority of it, by the manner in which it has been propagated.

If it had been propagated with the ſame ſimplicity and plainneſs, with which it was taught originally by the author of it, natural religion would have been enforced, and could not have been corrupted, by chriſtianity; but a voluminous and intricate ſyſtem of artificial theology was grafted on it: both which obſervations have been made already, and muſt be often repeated for the honour of the goſpel. This ſyſtem was framed ſoon by habits contracted in the ſchools of judaiſm and paganiſm. In the firſt, their ſecond or oral law, that is, their traditions were taught; and what this ſcience was may be ſeen in the collection of them made a century and an half after

Digitized by Google

CHRIST, by one of their rabbins;* the ſmall obligation of being acquainted with which we ignorant perſons owe to the labors of ſeveral great ſcholars. What the ſcience taught in the others was, we know from the remains of pythagorean doctrines, and from the writings of PLATO, that are come down to us, and that were in great vogue among the firſt teachers of chriſtianity. Well might theſe men grow credulous in one, fantaſtical in the other, and ſuperſtitious in both. Such were they, whom we call very properly fathers of the church, ſince they begot the diſcipline, and much the greateſt part of the doctrines of it. Eaſily impoſed upon, and prone to impoſe, like the Jews fond of myſtery, and of principles of knowledge laid beyond the bounds of all knowledge, like pythagoric and platonic metaphyſicians; it is no wonder that they ran into theological obſcurity with the light of the goſpel ſhining before them. Accuſtomed to declaim rather than reaſon, and to employ figurative ſtyle even on ſubjects that require the moſt exact determination of ideas and preciſion of terms, like the rhetors of Greece and Rome; accuſtomed to advance intrepidly whatever ſerved to the preſent purpoſe, without any regard to truth, like the ſophiſts of thoſe ages, which practice St. JEROM † defended and imputed to St. PETER and St.

* JUDAH HAKKADOSH, or the holy.
† Vid. Comm. in Ep. ad Gal. cap. ii.

PAUL;

PAUL; it is no wonder that they oppoſed ſometimes error to error, and very often jargon to jargon.

SUCH ſcience as this, and ſuch habits as theſe, produced infinite abſurdities, grounded on precarious tradition and falſe reaſoning; with which I ſhall meddle in this place no further than the ſubject before me requires. To ſeek the will of God, and the duty of man, in the conſtitution of the world, and of the human nature, wherein they are moſt evidently revealed, would have been deemed too low a manner of philoſophiſing for thoſe men to take, who pretended to gifts of the Spirit, whilſt that opinion was rife among the firſt Chriſtians: and when it was ſo no longer, their ſucceſſors had a recourſe that ſerved them almoſt as well. They ſought the will of God, and the duty of man, in their own comments and paraphraſes of ſcripture, in the abſtract reaſon of things, and in the eternal ideas, where SOCRATES and PLATO had ſent men to find whatever is unknown on earth, as ARIOSTO ſends them to the moon to find whatever is loſt on earth. They deduced moral obligations from the divine attributes, of which they might think themſelves more competent judges than others, becauſe they thought themſelves better informed by the Jews of his manner of government; and by chriſtian tradition, if I dare to ſay ſo, of his private life and converſation.

Digitized by Google

These methods of framing and defending a ſyſtem of religion were very convenient. They were in the hands of the fathers, what the cabala was in thoſe of the rabbins. If they did not make an oral, they made a ſecond law; neceſſary, like the other, in pretence, to the perfection and to the intelligence of the firſt; and that gathered as it rolled on, till it became as voluminous, and, by dint of explanation and commentary, as abſtruſe. Among other recommendations, inſiſted on by Clarke, of theſe methods of reaſoning, from the divine attributes and the eternal reaſon of things, to the moral obligations under which we are laid by the will of God, whereof I ſpeak particularly here, and to the deſigns of God in creating the world and man, as well as to the conduct of his providence, in the government of the whole, whereof I ſhall ſpeak hereafter; the univerſality of them is one. Now it is this very univerſality which aggravates the preſumption of mankind, which ſets the danger of theſe methods of reaſoning in a ſtronger light, and which proves invincibly againſt him that they are far from being what he aſſerts they are, the beſt, cleareſt, and certaineſt that philoſophy affords. When we deduce the will of God, and the duty of man, from the conſtitution of the world, and of the human nature, we deduce them from real knowledge: and we may have the certainty of this knowledge, through all the parts of natural religion, if we never loſe ſight of the firſt principles of it. That men loſe this certainty, both philoſophers

Digitized by Google

ſophers and others, both they who reaſon a priori, and ſometimes they who reaſon a poſteriori, is true. The vaſt variety of opinions concerning the morality and immorality of actions, and the number of contradictory laws, that have been all made with the ſame deſign, to promote the practice of natural religion, ſhew it to be ſo. But the difference lies here. Tho' neither of theſe methods can ſecure men abſolutely from error in forming general maxims, and much leſs in the particular applications even of ſuch of theſe as are true, yet they have in one caſe a ſure criterion, and in the other none at all. The reaſoner a poſteriori may at all times go back to thoſe principles of knowledge from which he ſet out, and which he will find always the ſame; retrace his own reaſonings, and rectify his miſtakes. But whither ſhall the reaſoner a priori go? Shall he go back to the abſtract reaſon of things, and to the moral attributes of the deity, from which he ſet out? But in them, as often as he has recourſe to them, he will find no ſuch criterion. The notions of other men will differ from his, and the firſt principles of his boaſted knowledge, for want of ſuch a criterion, will be founded in probability at beſt. It required no ſuch metaphyſical apparatus, as CLARKE employs ſomewhat tediouſly, to prove that all perfections, natural and moral, muſt be attributes of the ſelf-exiſtent, all-perfect author of all being: but he does not prove what he aſſerts, and on the proof of which his whole argument turns, that theſe atributes are the ſame in God, as they are in

in our ideas *. He ſays indeed that he has proved it: and if we do not accept his proofs, he leaves us to recur to downright atheiſm; nay, he threatens to force us into it. Happily he has not been able to do the miſchief he meditated. Many a man believes in God, who does not believe in him. Many a man diſcerns, in their fulleſt light, the evidences of natural religion, and gives their due weight to thoſe of revealed religion, without taking aſſumptions for demonſtrations, and a chain of the former, which have an imaginary connection only, for a chain of the latter riſing out of one another, and cloſely connected together.

I HAVE enlarged the rather on this head, becauſe the example of this modern divine is extremely proper to give us an image of the antient divines who raiſed the theological ſyſtem. Few of them reaſoned ſo well even as he; but they ſet the manner which he and the reſt of their ſucceſſors have followed: a manner, which may ſerve, as it did formerly, and as it does ſtill, in ſome degree, to realiſe, in appearance, the whimſies of every over-heated brain, and to maintain indeterminable diſputes: a manner, which, proving almoſt every thing, proves almoſt nothing, and which, if it can be of any uſe, can be ſo only under the control of the other method. It can be only of ſubordinate uſe. It may illuſtrate: it never can, it never did, decide: and the diſputes it raiſed in the early ages of chriſtianity may be well called

* Evid. p. 33. 34. et alibi.

inde-

Digitized by Google

indeterminable, since they are not yet determined. I have good reason to say, though I cannot say it on my own knowledge, that some of them were not determined in CLARKE's own mind, though he has pronounced dogmatically about them in his writings.

WHEN I say that the method of reasoning a priori, from the eternal reason of things, and from the divine attributes, may be of some subordinate use, under the control of the other; I mean that although our moral obligations arise from our moral system, that is, from the works of God, and the additional motives to observe them from the word of God, alone; yet arguments deduced in this method, and expressly authorised by neither, may serve to warm the imagination, to move the affections, and by a sort of pious fraud to enforce natural religion. A lively declamation, unsupported by reason, and even by gospel revelation, concerning the whole scheme, order, and state of things, from the original design of God in the creation of man to his fall, and from thence to his redemption; a pathetical exhortation to imitate God, in the exercise of his glorious attributes, in those perfections which are the foundations of his own unchangeable happiness, in which we are able to imitate him, and in which he desires that we should imitate him, because he has an infinitely tenderer and heartier concern for us, than any earthly father has for his posterity, to speak the language of Dr. CLARKE; such declamations and such exhortations,

Digitized by Google

tions, I say, may have a great and a good effect, especially when they flow from an eloquent mouth, and from the pulpit. The man, who is convinced by his reflections on human nature, and the nature of society, for instance that benevolence, and justice, and truth are the duties of natural religion, on the practice of which his happiness, and that of his whole kind, depend, will not be further convinced, but he may be more moved, and his passions may be wrought up to second his judgment.

If the fathers of the church, and modern divines, had made no other use of this method of reasoning, than to strengthen a sense of our moral obligations, and to raise in the minds of men a greater veneration for the scriptures, after they had proved the authenticity of them by external proofs; it had been well both for natural and revealed religion. But they have made a very different use of it. They have shook the former down to its very foundation: and, under pretence of explaining and defending the other, they have laid it more open to the attacks of unbelievers. Reason is sober and modest. She never affects to lead men beyond her bounds, but delivers them over to revelation. There is, and there needs must be, something marvellous in revelation. This marvellous dazzles, and often blinds; so that they who pursue it too far slide easily into the whimsies of their own imaginations. Truth warms their brains; error, that passes for it, turns them.

Thus

Digitized by Google

Thus chriſtianity became fanaticiſm, even in the firſt profeſſors of it. Thus artificial theology grew up as faſt as men began to teach the doctrine of CHRIST, like a revelation made ſo obſcurely and imperfectly, that they who were to publiſh it were to explain it, and not only to explain it, but to ſupply the deficiencies of it: and ſome will be apt to think that the firſt of theſe men was PAUL. Divines would be furious to hear ſuch language held as I hold to you. But they would be under great difficulties to evade the charge, and therefore the more furious; ſince I could eaſily produce paſſages out of the moſt renowned of the fathers, and out of their own writings, as extravagant as any in the Talmud, as abſurd as any in the Koran, and quite fit to hold their places in one of BORRI's letters: and ſince the whole eccleſiaſtical hiſtory is an hiſtory of the intolerance and violence of Chriſtians to one another, on ſuch points as theſe, from the time they had it in their power to be intolerant and to perſecute. You will not expect a bead-roll of theſe doctrines and diſputes. It will be ſufficient to ſhew how they had the effects that have been mentioned, both in natural and revealed religion.

XXXV.

CLARKE obſerves, that there is now no ſuch thing as a conſiſtent ſcheme of theiſm. A complete one, ſuch an one as preſumes to account for the whole order and ſtate of things relatively to God and man, I believe there is not. But

Digitized by Google

But how does the learned writer make out his propoſition? That of the beſt heathen philoſophers, which alone was ſuch, ceaſes now to be ſo, he ſays, after the appearance of revelation; becauſe it directly conducts men to the belief of chriſtianity. If he intends the ſocratical and platonic ſcheme, and he can intend no other, what he advances is untrue; unleſs it be true that a ſcheme, which appears ſometimes dogmatical, and ſometimes ſceptical, that favours monotheiſm and polytheiſm in the ſame breath, as it were, may be conſiſtent. If this ſcheme led to chriſtianity in any ſort, as I think it did, this was due not to the conſiſtency, but the inconſiſtency of it. Several of its doctrines were adopted into articles of faith by chriſtianity. Others were rejected. It happened accordingly. This adoption drew ſeveral of theſe philoſophers into chriſtianity: and this rejection made ſeveral averſe to it. JUSTIN died to maintain it. PORPHYRY would have died to oppoſe it. That platoniſm was a conſiſtent ſcheme, or that it conducted men directly to chriſtianity, is not true therefore. But it is very true, that the method of raiſing a priori, from heaven, if I may ſay ſo, that we do not know, to earth, inſtead of reaſoning from earth that we do know, to heaven, was introduced into chriſtianity with doctrines which the ſame method had broached in paganiſm; that this method continued to be in common that of thoſe who embraced the chriſtian profeſſion, and of thoſe who oppoſed it; and that it propagated fanaticiſm alike in both, as every man,

Digitized by Google

man, who compares, for inſtance, St. AUSTIN and PLOTINUS together with indifference, which every man ſhould do in ſuch a caſe, muſt confeſs.

CHRISTIAN fanaticiſm was more catching and in that reſpect more dangerous than the other. Some of the heathen ſaints pretended to raviſhments, to extaſies, to occaſional unions with the ſupreme intelligence, and to revelation. But thoſe of chriſtianity had, beſides all theſe advantages, the word of God himſelf to produce againſt unbelievers, and they hawled this word ſo well to their purpoſes (the expreſſion is St. JEROM's *) that every ſide appealed to in the diſputes they had with one another. The conſequence was, that every ſide damned all the reſt, and, which was really worſe, perſecuted them in this world. The heathens exerciſe great violence againſt one another in their quarrels about their ſecular intereſts; but religion neither cauſed nor fomented them: whereas the quarrels of this kind were the moſt frequent and the moſt inveterate among Chriſtians. They broke not only the bonds of alliance between nations, but thoſe of kindred in families, and thoſe of friendſhip where it was the moſt intimate. Such quarrels turned frequently on metaphyſical ſpeculations which no ſide underſtood, or on rites and ceremonies of no importance to religion. Theſe were the objects that engroſſed, with thoſe of eccleſiaſtical power and

* Trahere ſcripturas.

wealth,

Digitized by Google

wealth, the whole attention of the church, and, under her influence, almoſt the whole attention of the ſtate, as it appears by the behaviour of the Roman emperors after CONSTANTINE, ſome of whom ſeemed to have no other concern in the greateſt diſtreſs of that empire, and in the very moment of its fall. Nay, there is mention made of one, who had a ſcruple of conſcience about the time he ſpent in ſecular affairs, and the government of his people. Thus reformation of manners, was the concern of nobody; and whilſt the utmoſt diſſolution of them was practiſed and indulged by the clergy, men were perſecuted, at their inſtigation, for the leaſt ſuppoſed error in forms of ſpeech, or in forms of worſhip; and injuſtice and murder were made duties of religion on this account. Is there not ſufficient reaſon now to aſſert, that natural religion has been corrupted, and ſhook to the foundations of it, by artificial theology?

SOCIABILITY is the great inſtinct, and benevolence the great law, of human nature, which no other law can repeal, or alter: and yet when men have accuſtomed themſelves to think of the Supreme Being as of an human legiſlator and governor, and to aſcribe to the all-perfect being the ſame ideas, the ſame ſentiments, affections, and paſſions, that they perceive in themſelves; they may eaſily come to imagine, or to make others imagine, him as intent to preſerve the outward forms of his court, as the moſt eſſential laws of his

Digitized by Google

his government; and themſelves as much bound at leaſt to be good courtiers, as good ſubjects. They may think themſelves ſureſt to pleaſe in the firſt of theſe characters. On a confidence in the merit of it, they may not only neglect the duties of the other, but they may ſacrifice, to a falſe notion of honouring the prince, the fundamental laws and the conſtitution of his government. They may think, or they may repreſent themſeves to be, his favourites, and they may treat even his beſt ſubjects as rebels, by virtue of laws which his miniſters make, and which he is ſuppoſed to authoriſe.

THIS alluſion to the abuſes of civil government, in the kingdoms of earthly monarchs, gives a true image of thoſe which have always prevailed in the ſpiritual kingdom of CHRIST, to the ſubverſion of it's original conſtitution: and with this alluſion I ſhall finiſh this head.

XXXVI.

BUT I have undertaken to ſhew further, that artificial theology, which has ſhaken the foundations of natural religion, has laid revealed religion much more open to the attacks of unbelievers, by explanations and defences, than it would have been, if it had been left to ſtand without them on the proper proofs of this fact ſingly, it is a divine revelation. Now to illuſtrate this point, let us ſuppoſe a theiſt objecting to ſome modeſt reaſoner a poſteriori, who is firmly perſuaded of the authen-

Digitized by Google

ticity of the ſcriptures, that they contain many things repugnant to the juſtice and goodneſs of God, and unworthy of his majeſty, his wiſdom, and power. The believer might reply, that he knows the difference between knowledge produced by the certainty of demonſtration, and that aſſurance which the higheſt degree of probability may produce; that an aſſurance founded on any leſs degree of probability would not be ſufficient in this caſe; but that aſſurance founded on probability is the utmoſt which can be had in all caſes of this kind; and, therefore, that he thinks himſelf obliged to receive theſe books for the word of God, though he cannot reconcile every thing that they contain to his ideas of the attributes of an infinite all-perfect Being. He might add, that he ſees and feels many things in the conſtitution of the phyſical and moral world, and in the conduct of providence, which it is not eaſy to reconcile to the ſame attributes; and yet that he knows, with all the certainty of demonſtration, that the former are the works, and the latter the act, of God. He might add, that revelation may be neceſſary to illuminate reaſon in matters of religion, becauſe there is a more immediate correſpondence in matters of religion between God and man, but that reaſon cannot explain revelation, nor much leſs enforce it; that nothing leſs than another revelation can do either; and that in the mean time it is the duty of man to ſubmit to believe what he does, and to adore what he does not, underſtand. This the reaſoner a poſteriori might reply with great plauſi-

Digitized by Google

plauſibility at leaſt. But the reaſoner a priori could have no right to uſe the ſame language. A theiſt would retort his own doctrine againſt him in this manner. "You argue, and you pretend to "demonſtrate, on your ideas of juſtice and good-"neſs as well as of wiſdom and power, and by "the reaſon of things, even when your arguments "and your ſuppoſed demonſtrations conclude "againſt the conſtitution and government of the "world, which you and I both acknowledge to "be from God. With what face then can you "object to me, that I reaſon upon the ſame ideas, "and by the ſame rule, concerning this book "which you acknowledge, and I do not, to be "the word of God? Muſt I reſpect probability "more than you reſpect certainty, and a proba-"bility which is either not eſtabliſhed, or is eſta-"bliſhed by halves? It is not eſtabliſhed, if the "book contains any thing which implies an ab-"ſolute contradiction with any conceivable per-"fection even of the human nature. It is eſta-"bliſhed by halves, whatever external proofs you "may bring, unleſs you can ſhew that the things "contained in it, which ſeem repugnant to all "our ideas of a perfect nature, are really con-"ſiſtent with them; which muſt be ſhewn not "by a precarious begging of the queſtion, but by "direct and evident proofs." What now muſt the reaſoner a priori do? He muſt give up the cauſe to the theiſt, or he muſt ſubmit to the taſk which the reaſoner a poſteriori evaded, by crying out from the firſt, O altitudo! and by declining to

Digitized by Google

examine any objections to matters contained in the ſcriptures: in ſhort, he puts himſelf under a neceſſity of ſhewing that all theſe matters are exactly conſonant to the dictates of ſound reaſon, or the unprejudiced light of nature, and moſt wiſely perfective of it *; and that all the doctrines .... neceſſary to ſalvation, or cloſely connected with ſuch as are ſo, are apparently moſt agreeable to reaſon, though not diſcoverable by it †.

THIS taſk has been undertaken accordingly by every divine; ſanguinely and dogmatically by moſt, weakly by all of them. One of your acquaintance and mine ‡ has diſtinguiſhed himſelf, in all theſe reſpects, by writing on the ſubject, as he would have preached to an iriſh congregation. But that ſuch a man as CLARKE ſhould write upon it at all, and have nothing better to ſay than what he has ſaid, may ſerve to ſhew how theſe men are led, by their manner of reaſoning, and by their artificial theology, to diſarm chriſtianity of her beſt defence, by taking her out of the ſtrong-hold of revelation, and by truſting to thoſe feeble entrenchments, which they are able to caſt up: for even thoſe which CLARKE caſt up are feeble beyond belief. I am not anſwering his book, and ſhall, therefore, do no more than make a tranſient mention of ſome particulars: but I am willing to reſt the truth of what I have advanced, even on this tranſient mention.

* Evid. p. 239. † Ib. p. 244. ‡ Dr. DELANY.

THE

THE doctor is to prove it agreeable to ſound unprejudiced reaſon to believe, that the Supreme Being did generate a divine perſon or emanation from himſelf: and he proves it by aſſerting that this doctrine contains no manner of abſurdity nor contradiction in it. This was more eaſily aſſerted than proved, ſome perſons would ſay. But beſides, is it agreeable to reaſon to believe a propoſition true, merely becauſe it does not manifeſtly imply contradiction? Is every thing, that is poſſible, probable? or is it reaſonable to believe, on the probability that a revelation is a true revelation, any thing that may be poſſibly not inconſiſtent with the perfections of the divine nature, but that ſeems to be ſo in probable opinion? It is ſaid, that the wiſeſt and moſt learned of the antient philoſophers received and taught ſome doctrines .... as difficult to comprehend, as any thing in this article of the chriſtian faith, and that theſe men would not have made any objection to it on this account. Agreed. How then does the argument ſtand? Reduce it to it's juſt value, and it ſtands thus. The heathen philoſophers taught many doctrines as incomprehenſible as this, without any pretence of a divine authority; and their own wild hypotheſes would have conducted them readily to receive this, on the authority of a revelation: it is, therefore, agreeable to ſound unprejudiced reaſon, that we, who know how fantaſtical their whole theology was, ſhould follow the example which it is aſſumed they would have ſet us,

Digitized by Google

and believe, without any of their prejudices, what they might have been induced, by these very prejudices, to believe. This doctrine of the logos or nous was taught in some of the egyptian, and other schools of eastern divinity: and we are not to wonder if PLATO, who had it from them, spoke obscurely, or understood little concerning it, since it is not discoverable by bare reason. But I think that PLATO would not have been more willing than ARIUS, or CLARKE himself, to subscribe to the athanasian creed. He would have assented perhaps, as much as he assented in other cases, to a co-evality of the Son with the Father, as the eternal effect of an eternal cause. But he would not have assented to their co-equality. He assumed that the Son and the Spirit are distinct subordinate beings, and no more co-equal with the one Supreme Being, in the order of nature, than the world was thought to be by ARISTOTLE, and the philosophers who maintained the eternity of it.

ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON'S challenge to the Socininians it is not to my purpose to examine; and I need say nothing of the Holy Spirit, since all that CLARKE says is, that the same which is said of the second may be understood, very agreeably to right reason and with little variation, of the third.

THAT the account the bible gives of a paradisiacal state, of the loss of it by sin, and of the consequences of this loss, are exactly consonant to the dictates

dictates of ſound reaſon,* or the unprejudiced light of nature, and moſt wiſely perfective of it (for thus far his undertaking goes) it behoved him to make out very clearly; becauſe if the redemption be, as he owns it is †, the main and fundamental article of the chriſtian faith, ſure I am, that the account of the fall of man is the foundation of this fundamental article. He ſhould have laboured this point the rather, ſince it is, in all it's circumſtances, abſolutely irreconcileable to every idea we can frame of wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs, to ſay nothing of the dignity of the Supreme Being, who is introduced ſo familiarly, and employed ſo indecently, in taking the cool air, in making coats of ſkins, to ſerve inſtead of aprons of fig leaves which ADAM and EVE had ſewed together; and not only in curſing the ſerpent, and them, and their whole poſterity, and the world itſelf for their ſakes, but in joking moſt cruelly on them; for the twenty-ſecond verſe of the third chapter of Geneſis is allowed to be an holy irony or ſarcaſm by that learned divine MATTHEW POOLE. Inſtead of proving any part of this to be agreeable to ſound reaſon, and the unprejudiced light of nature, CLARKE paſſes over the whole, as very reaſonable and credible in itſelf; which it appears to be, he ſays, not only from the abſtract conſideration of the nature of the thing, ‡ but alſo from the general opinion of the heathens, that the original ſtate of man was innocent and ſimple, till God, for the

* Evid. p. 239. † Ib. p. 262. ‡ Ib. p. 255.

Digitized by Google

ſins of men, changed this happy conſtitution of things. In the name of God, is this to prove? Do men, who prove no better, deſerve an anſwer, how much reputation ſoever they may have acquired? Their adverſaries deny, and have attempted to ſhew that this account of the fall of man is unreaſonable and incredible, in every conſideration, abſtract, or particular. This champion in demonſtration ſays, it is very reaſonable and credible from the abſtract conſideration of the thing. He ſays no more. He begs the queſtion, therefore, ſhamefully, on the very point in diſpute, and which he undertook to maintain. The heathen, the moſt antient and learned of them, are again brought in to no purpoſe whatever; ſince if they had all agreed in ſome general and obſcure tradition of this ſort, it would avail little as to the reaſonableneſs and credibility of this change in the conſtitution of things, and nothing as to the particular circumſtances which are made the angular ſtones of the whole fabric of chriſtianity. One cannot conſider the uſe which CLARKE makes, ſo frequently, and to ſo little purpoſe, of the heathen philoſophers, without laughing, as CALANUS, the doctor's voucher on this occaſion, laughed at the dreſs of ONESICRITUS, when he bid him ſtrip and lye down naked on the ſtones by him.* The mad gymnoſophiſt had begun, whilſt he laughed, to tell the meſſenger of ALEXANDER, as a ſample of his wiſdom, how fertile the world was in antient times, how the fountains ran with milk, with

* STRABO, Lib. XV.

water,

water, with honey, with wine, and with oil; how JUPITER had deſtroyed this conſtitution of things *; for the iniquity of men, who abuſed his goodneſs, and had obliged them to live by their labour; how it had been reſtored again on their reformation; and what danger there was, now they had relapſed into almoſt the ſame iniquity, that the end of all things ſhould be at hand. He would have proceeded, no doubt, in much the ſame ſtyle, if MANDANIS, the head of the order, had not impoſed ſilence on him, and calling ONESICRITUS to himſelf from CALANUS, had not talked with great decency and good ſenſe, in a manner, and on ſubjects proper for the Greek to report to his prince. Thus the hiſtory of the fall, and all the circumſtances of it are proved reaſonable and probable.

XXXVII.

OUR author takes a little more pains to ſhew, that the doctrine of the redemption of mankind is agreeable to reaſon. Having aſſumed, which he calls proving, that the moral attributes of God, and the notions and expectations of ſome wiſe men among the heathens, make it reaſonable to believe God did make, ſeventeen hundred years ago, a revelation of his will to mankind, as if mankind ſtood in more need of a revelation four thouſand years after their race began, than at any other period; as if the moral attributes of God

* . . . ob ſatietatem et luxuriam ad contumeliam ſe tranſdiderunt,

were

Digitized by Google

were not the ſame, four thouſand years before, when he made the firſt revelation of his will in the conſtitution of nature; and finally, as if the notions and expectations of SOCRATES and PLATO, ſuppoſing theſe philoſophers to have had them really, proved any thing more than their deſire of more knowledge than God thought proper to give them the means of acquiring; having aſſumed all this, I ſay, he proceeds to argue in this manner*. "Some ſacrifice or expiation for ſin was "neceſſary to be appointed, to ſhew God's irre-"concileable hatred to it. Repentance might not "be ſufficient. God would not be appeaſed with-"out ſome puniſhment and ſatisfaction; and yet "he would accept ſome other than the deſtruc-"tion of offenders. This appears, in the cuſtom "of ſacrificing, to have been the univerſal ap-"prehenſion of mankind:" and, from this univerſal apprehenſion he concludes that "the doc-"trine of the redemption is plainly agreeable "to right reaſon." Thus are theſe great maſters of reaſon reduced to propoſe the moſt groſs abuſes for the true dictates of it. Thus are the moſt abſurd notions which ſuperſtition ever ſpread, in contradiction to the law of nature and reaſon, applied to the proceedings of God with man; made the meaſure of divine juſtice by philoſophers, who determine and define the moral attributes of the deity; and eſtabliſhed as foundations of the chriſtian ſyſtem by divines, who pretend, and who are hired to defend it. Notions, which directed a

* Evid. p. 263, et ſeq.

principal

principal part of idolatrous worſhip, are ſanctified, and the moſt inhuman rites are rendered the moſt meritorious: for if it was agreeable to ſound reaſon to think that God would not be appeaſed unleſs ſome blood was ſpilled, he who ſhed that of beaſts to expiate ſins did well, but he who ſhed that of his children did better. He brought the puniſhment nearer to himſelf: and the Phenician had the advantage, in this reſpect, of the Iſraelite. He erred, whatever he ſacrificed, by the miſapplication of a true principle, when he ſacrificed to MOLOCH. But the Iſraelite, who did not miſapply the principle, would have purſued it more agreeably to ſound reaſon, and the unprejudiced light of nature, if he had ſacrificed his ſon, as ABRAHAM was ready to do, or his daughter, like JEPHTHAH. God was pleaſed to accept of an expiation that coſt offenders leſs to make, under the moſaical diſpenſation, as the ſcriptures tell us. But the ſame ſcriptures prove evidently that the reaſon of the thing goes as far as I carry it; ſince, under the chriſtian diſpenſation, God cauſed the expiation for ſin to be made by the ſufferings and death of his own Son; than which nothing can be imagined, as CLARKE * aſſures us, more honourable and worthy of the Supreme Lord and Governor of all things.

WE weigh theſe matters in the balance of human reaſon, to which the appeal is made, if men who decide can be ſaid to appeal, even though they

* Ib. p. 268.

affirm

affirm that God condescends to do so. They are refuted, therefore, if they have not reason, as well as revelation, on their side: and the charge of weakening the cause of the latter, whilst they presume to defend it by the former, is made out against them. Let us proceed, therefore, with a due respect for revelation, and with no more than it deserves for their reasoning.

I SAY then, though we should allow men were in the right to think universally that God exacted some bloody expiation for sin, and that repentance, which the law of nature points out, was not sufficient, yet even this concession would not justify the doctrine of the redemption of mankind at the bar of reason. The heathens thought that the sacrifice of an ox, or a son, or a daughter, would atone for their sins. Therefore, it is plainly agreeable to the universal reason of mankind, signified by this universal apprehension, to believe that God sent his only begotten Son, who had not offended him, to be sacrificed by men, who had offended him, that he might expiate their sins, and satisfy his own anger. Surely our ideas of moral attributes will lead us to think that God would have been satisfied, more agreeably to his mercy and goodness, without any expiation, upon the repentance of the offenders, and more agreeably to his justice with any other expiation, rather than with this. The heathen divines were accustomed to think and speak of their gods much after the manner of men. If one of them, therefore, had arisen from

Digitized by Google

from the dead, he would have concurred readily with CLARKE in the maxim, that the moral attributes are the ſame in the divine nature, as they are in our ideas. But then he would have challenged the doctor to produce an example, in the pagan ſyſtem, of a god ſacrificing his ſon to appeaſe himſelf, any more than of a god who was himſelf his own father and his own ſon. SATURN, he might ſay, did indeed offer up his ſon in ſacrifice: but he did it to appeaſe COELUS, not himſelf.

WHEN our divine is about to eſtabliſh, "that "there is a fitneſs and unfitneſs of certain circum- "ſtances to certain perſons, founded in the nature "of things, and in the qualifications of per- "ſons; he ſays, that this muſt be acknowledged "by every one who will not affirm that it is "equally fit ... that an innocent being ſhould be "extremely and eternally miſerable, as that it "ſhould be free from ſuch miſery." The propoſition is true without diſpute, though it is not true that we can always diſcern this fitneſs and unfitneſs. Let us join iſſue with the learned perſon here, and add, to ſtrengthen the maxim, that there is the ſame unfitneſs, in the caſe ſuppoſed, whether the miſery be aſſumed eternal, or not. Let us aſk now, whether the truth of this maxim, the innocence of the Lamb of God, and the ſufferings and ignominious death of CHRIST, can be reconciled together, and how? The niceſt caſuiſt would, I think, be puzzled: but our caſuiſt goes on moſt dogmatically, and ſhews no more regard

to

Digitized by Google

to the dignity, than to the innocence, of the divine perſon who died on the croſs. He does, indeed, allow that no one can certainly ſay that God might not have pardoned ſin upon repentance without any ſacrifice. But he pronounces this method of doing it, by the death of CHRIST, to be more wiſe and fit for ſeveral prudential reaſons. Read them, they would appear futile and impertinent if applied to human counſels; but in their application to the divine counſels they become profane and impious. Nay, it would not be hard to ſhew that this method was more proper to produce a contrary effect, than that which is aſſigned as a reaſon for taking it. For inſtance, the death of CHRIST, it is ſaid, was proper to diſcountenance preſumption, and to diſcourage men from repeating their tranſgreſſions. Surely it would not be hard to ſhew by reaſon, that the death of CHRIST might, and by fact, that it has countenanced preſumption without diſcouraging men from repeating their tranſgreſſions. But I ſhall not deſcend into particulars that are trifling and tedious, and that would render a full anſwer to them little better. A general reflection or two, may ſerve, and are as much as they all deſerve.

THO' I am far from approving the practice of thoſe who compare ſo frequently the divine with the human oeconomy and policy, and who build on the laſt their hypothetical ſchemes of the firſt; yet on this occaſion, and to frame an argument ad hominem, it may be properly done. Let us ſuppoſe

poſe then a great prince governing a wicked and rebellious people. He has it in his power to puniſh, he thinks fit to pardon them. But he orders his only and beloved Son to be put to death to expiate their ſins, and to ſatisfy his royal vengeance. Would this proceeding appear to the eye of reaſon, and in the unprejudiced light of nature, wiſe, or juſt, or good? No man dares to ſay that it would, except he be a divine: for CLARKE does in effect ſay that it would; ſince he imputes this very proceeding to God, and juſtifies it not implicitely on the authority of revelation, but explicitely on the authority of reaſon, which may be applied to man as well as to God, and as a particular inſtance of the general rule that is, according to him, common to both. Allow me one reflection more.

CLARKE acknowledges readily, that human reaſon could never have diſcovered ſuch a method as this for the reconciliation of ſinners to an offended God. But if reaſon could not have diſcovered it, how comes it to paſs that reaſon finds no ſuch difficulty nor inconceivableneſs in it, as to make a wiſe man call the truth of it in queſtion? the truth of a well-atteſted revelation, he ſays. But here he plays the ſophiſt. He is to prove the method agreeable to ſound unprejudiced reaſon, independently of revelation. No matter how it came to be known, is it reaſonable, is it agreeable to a fitneſs founded in the nature of things and in the qualifications of perſons? This is the point to be conſidered. To conſider it as reaſonable relatively

latively to the revelation of it, is not to appeal to unprejudiced, but to prejudiced reaſon. It is in plain terms to beg the queſtion ſhamefully. Heathen theology was licentious enough in all conſcience. The profeſſors of it gave an extravagant looſe to their imaginations, paſſed all the bounds of probability, and ſcarce kept within thoſe of conceivable poſſibility. Thus they came very near to ſuch a ſyſtem as this; ſo near, that there was little more to be added: but this little, they did not think ſo highly of the human, and ſo lowly of the divine nature, as was neceſſary to make them add it. Aesculapius came down from heaven, converſed in a viſible form with men, and taught them the art of healing diſeaſes. The paſſage is cited from Julian by Clarke *, in order to ſhew, according to his laudable cuſtom, that there is nothing in the chriſtian ſyſtem which we may not believe on grounds of reaſon, becauſe there is nothing in it more incredible than what the leaſt reaſonable men that ever were, wild metaphyſicians, heathens, heretics, apoſtates, have believed. It may be cited more properly to ſhew, what I mean to ſhew by it, how eaſy and ſhort a tranſition might have been made by heathen divines, in the rage that poſſeſſed them all of framing complete ſchemes of the whole order and ſtate of things, from a god teaching phyſic to a god teaching theology. The moſt ignorant and ſavage of them, like the Phenicians and the Carthaginians, who have been already mentioned, for they were all ſu-

* Ib. p. 268.

perſtitious

perſtitious alike, came a little nearer to the doctrine of redemption. But even they did not come up to it entirely. They meaned to encourage the pious practice of ſacrificing their children; for pious it was on the principle of expiation by ſhedding of blood: but there was a great difference between the conceptions they had of their gods, and thoſe which Chriſtians have of the Father and the Son. Their gods had been men, and SATURN was a man when he ſacrificed his ſon. Their ideas of human government led them to notions of divine mediations, and of expiations by ſhedding of blood, which were ſo many particular redemptions. But nothing in the reaſon of the thing, nor in the moſt ſuperſtitious of their prejudices, could lead them to imagine ſo much rigor in one god, as to exact that another ſhould be ſacrificed even by men who meaned no expiation, and in whom it was a murder, not a ſacrifice; nor ſo much humility and condeſcenſion in another as to make him ſubmit to be this divine victim. They could not imagine any thing ſo repugnant, as this, to all their ideas of order, of juſtice, of goodneſs, and in ſhort, of theiſm; tho' they imagined many other things that were really inconſiſtent with all theſe ideas. Thoſe of them, therefore, who embraced this doctrine, after it had been revealed, embraced it, not becauſe they found no difficulty nor inconceivableneſs in it, which CLARKE was to prove by proving it agreeable to ſound reaſon, but merely becauſe it was part of a revelation they believed true for reaſons of another kind: which is

Digitized by Google

nothing to his purpoſe under this head of argument.

XXXVIII.

ALL that he ſays more, than I have obſerved upon it; all that follows about the importance of this world of ours, which it is aſſumed was made for the ſake of man, and which, we are told, is as conſiderable and worthy of the divine care as moſt other parts of our ſyſtem, which is likewiſe as conſiderable as any other ſingle ſyſtem in the univerſe, in order to take off the objection ariſing from the meanneſs of the creature; and finally all that follows about the manifeſtations of God, and the diſcoveries of his will, ſuppoſed to have been made by the ſame divine Logos to other beings in other ſyſtems, in order to take off the imputation of partiality from the Creator; all this, I ſay, is a rhapſody of preſumptuous reaſoning, of profane abſurdities diſguiſed by epithets, of evaſions that ſeem to anſwer whilſt they only perplex, and, in one word, of the moſt arbitrary and leaſt reaſonable ſuppoſitions. I will bring but one inſtance more of the excellent manner in which the author of the Evidences proves that all things, neceſſary to be believed in order to ſalvation, or cloſely connected with theſe, are moſt agreeable to ſound unprejudiced reaſon. He propoſes * the objection drawn from the want of univerſality to the chriſtian revelation. He had propoſed it before out of the oracles of reaſon: and his anſwer in both places

* Evidences p. 215, 216, 217, et 273.

is

is the ſame. It had been urged that no revelations, no inſtituted religions, had been univerſally received at any time, and by all nations; and that chriſtianity is in the ſame caſe with the reſt; that the Son of God did not appear till the latter ages of the world; and that, ſince he did appear, his goſpel has not been received univerſally, and even his appearance has not been known to a great number of nations. The doctor does not undertake to ſhew how men may receive the benefits of a revelation of which they never heard, tho' that ſeems to be his opinion: but he inſiſts triumphantly, that the ſame objection will lye againſt natural religion; and boaſts again that he can force the objector into abſolute atheiſm. He boaſts, like a bully who looks fierce, ſpeaks big, and is little to be feared: for there is no ſufficient parity between the two caſes, and his reaſon is, on this occaſion, as harmleſs as the other's ſword. To affirm that natural and revealed religion are alike unknown in any parts of the world, is to affirm an untruth. That all men have not the ſame capacities and opportunities of underſtanding the obligations of natural religion, is true, but proves nothing.

Go to any of theſe people whom we call barbarous, and who ſeem of all human creatures to have improved their reaſon the leaſt, you will find the light of nature, though not the light of the goſpel, ſhining, faintly indeed, but ſhining among them; ſome rules of moral life, ſome laws for the main-

Digitized by Google

tainance of ſociety, ſome awe and reverence of a Being ſuperior to man, ſome reward for virtue, ſome puniſhment for vice. The religion of nature is known and improved more or leſs according to the different opportunities which men have, in proportion to their different capacities, and perhaps to the different degrees in which they participate of one common nature. But it is known and obſerved more or leſs every where. Nay, there has been often occaſion to wiſh that the ſame moderation and innocence, which prevailed in ignorant nations, had been found in thoſe who are more improved in learning and civility; and that the knowledge of virtue had been of greater advantage to natural religion than the ignorance of vice.*

Is this now the caſe of the chriſtian religion? How many nations, civiliſed as well as barbarous, have there been, how many are there ſtill, by whom theſe tidings of good news have been never heard, nor even the leaſt rumour of them? How many others to whom they have been carried, and who have refuſed to hear them, or hearing to believe them? All the truths of natural religion are diſcoverable, it is allowed on all hands, by the due uſe of reaſon alone; and God has left them to be ſo diſcovered: for tho he has not given the ſame

* . . . . Utinam reliquis mortalibus ſimilis moderatio et abſtinentia alieni foret. Tantum plus in illis proficit vitiorum ignoratio, quam in his (nempe Graecis cognitio virtutis.) JUSTIN, lib. ii. cap. 2. ſpeaking of the Scythians.

capacity

Digitized by Google

capacity to all men in any caſe, he has given the ſame means to all men in this caſe. If natural religion is diſcoverable by all men, revealed religion is ſo by none: and the divine muſt have very little regard to conſiſtency, when he objects that God has not given to ſome the ſame capacity of making and improving this diſcovery, as he has given to others; ſince it is his own doctrine that in thoſe countries, where chriſtianity has been preached, ſome have believed and ſome have not believed, according to the different meaſures of grace, which is the free gift of God, beſtowed upon them.

But to carry this matter beyond the power of ſophiſm, and every polemical artifice; let us ſuppoſe whole nations as ignorant of natural religion as their bears and their wolves. Natural religion would be ſtill the ſame, and of the ſame authority. It would be the religion of reaſonable nature, and obligatory on all who had ſuch a nature. One part of Clarke's reaſoning, which he ſuppoſes falſely to be alike applicable both to that and to the chriſtian religion, would be well applied in favor of it. They who were endowed with rationality might ſay, with ſound reaſon and the unprejudiced light of nature on their ſide, "God is not "obliged to make all his creatures, even all thoſe "that are in appearance of the ſame ſpecies, equal; "and to aſſert that he is, would be a profane "diminution of his ſovereignty. Let us be "thankful for the means he has given us of im-

"proving our knowledge and our happineſs, "That he has not given them to other creatures, "would be a ſtrange reaſon for not improving "them ourſelves." They, who were not endowed with ſo much rationality, would have no more moral obligations incumbent on them, than their bears and their wolves. Is this plea now applicable to the want of univerſality, objected to the chriſtian revelation? It cannot be ſaid without equal abſurdity and effronterie. But they, to whom the terms of the chriſtian religion were communicated, might ſay, with ſound reaſon and the unprejudiced light of nature on their ſide, that theſe terms would have been communicated to all mankind alike, if the revelation had been from God; ſince all mankind were alike obliged to them, and ſince they, to whom theſe terms had not been communicated, would die, and might be damned, in their involuntary ignorance of them. Thus their faith would be ſhocked; or, if it was not, if they worked out their ſalvation with fear and trembling, the fate of the others would continue to be, what they pronounced it, moſt undeſervedly miſerable.

THIS needs little explanation: but to prevent all cavil, and to ſhew with greater evidence how inconſequently CLARKE argues, and would argue, even if natural religion wanted univerſality as much, and in as abſolute a manner, as he ſuppoſes, and as in fact the chriſtian religion wants it, let us deſcend into a more particular compariſon. In one caſe, then, God would have placed his human creatures

Digitized by Google

creatures in very different circumſtances, indeed: but the religion of reaſon obliges us to think that his proceedings towards them would have been proportioned to theſe circumſtances. In the other caſe, and according to the chriſtian revelation, he has, for the ſake of one man's offence, reduced all mankind to the ſame deplorable circumſtances. It is true that he ſent his Son, forty centuries afterwards, to redeem them from the conſequences of this ſituation: but the condition was, that they believed in his Son; "for there is no name under "heaven by which we can be ſaved but the name "of the man CHRIST JESUS." They are condemned without any fault of theirs: one ſole and uniform condition of ſaving themſelves is impoſed on all of them, and the greateſt part are deprived even of the knowledge of this condition. It will be ſaid, perhaps, which has been hinted already, that as the death of CHRIST had a retroactive effect on thoſe that lived and died before they were redeemed, ſo it may be beneficial to thoſe who never heard of it ſince. But theſe are the hypotheſes of theology and ſurmiſes of divines, not the expreſs and clear doctrines of chriſtianity. Nay, the divines, who held ſo charitable an opinion, would be oppoſed by other divines. St. THOMAS is pleaſed, notwithſtanding this text, to ſave ſome of the heathens by a diſtinction between implicite and explicite faith, and by aſſuming that the firſt might be a ſaving faith to thoſe who lived before the promulgation of the goſpel. But he is not ſo gracious to thoſe who have lived ſince that time.

Digitized by Google

Since the gospel was promulgated, nothing less than explicite faith will do: and he damns all those who have it not, whether they ever heard of CHRIST or no, most arbitrarily and most inconsistently. To conclude; there is no parity between the two cases. The first is agreeable to all our ideas of justice and goodness, as well as of sovereignty and order. But no subtilty whatever can reconcile the last to any ideas, except those of caprice, injustice, cruelty, and tyranny.

WHAT shall we say now? Is the cause of christianity too bad to be defended? Or is it defended booty? I think neither. I have too much respect for revelation to think one, and too much charity for the least charitable men alive to think the other. A presumptuous habit of reasoning, and the phrensy of metaphysics, are to be charged alone: It would pass for downright madness, if we were not accustomed to it, and if the practice of great and good men did not authorise it in common opinion, to hear a creature, placed in the lowest form of intelligent beings, undertake to penetrate the designs, to fathom the depths, and to unveil the mysteries of infinite wisdom, which the most exalted of created intelligences would adore in silence. When the tradition was recent, and the proofs irrefragable of all the facts on which the authority of christian revelation is, and can be alone properly founded, the fathers of the church might have stopped the mouths of all pretenders to reason, by refusing to reason about a revelation already proved

to

Digitized by Google

to be divine; by insisting that every thing necessary to be known was clearly and fully revealed, and that mysteries were recorded to exercise our faith, not our speculations, nor our logic. If they had not gone off this rock, in compliance with the philosophical mode of the age, and with the vanity of their own hearts, they could not have been forced from it. But when they had once engaged in platonic and aristotelical reasonings about christian mysteries, it was too late to go back. They might cry as loudly as they pleased, which they always did when they were pinched, that the judgments and ways of God were acatalepta, incomprehensible; but this cry came with an ill grace from them. It could have no effect on their adversaries. They might have made it a cry of triumph. They made it little better than a confession of defeat; and such it has continued ever since.

XXXIX.

IF I intended to proceed any further than CLARKE leads me on this occasion, I might consider in many more instances, taken from the writings of other divines, and of the fathers of the church, the manner in which they employ reason to account for revelation, sometimes literally, sometimes allegorically, always presumptuously, often ridiculously. To collect all the profane nonsense that has been broached above EVE and the serpent, about the trees of life and knowledge, and about other circumstances of the creation and fall

of

of man, which the curiosity of the woman, the wiles of the serpent, and the uxorious complaisance of ADAM effected, would be to collect an immense volume of all that has been writ on these subjects by Jews and Christians; for all that has been writ upon them is alike absurd. To run through all those passages of the Old Testament which are lessens of public and private immorality, of immodesty to women, and of sanguinary ferocity to men, which leave us no room to be surprised when we hear that there were certain heretics, who thought the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the New, and which shew that they who compiled the written law, from ESDRAS to SIMON the just, had as little discernment in the choice of their materials, as they who compiled the traditions of the oral law afterwards; both of which demonstrate that notions the most unworthy of God, and the most repugnant to the law of human nature, prevailed among the Jews in every age, though they were reconciled in their minds to some very sublime sentiments, and very true opinions: to run through all this, I say, would be not only tedious, but shocking to a man who considered these passages seriously, even to him, perhaps, who had heard them read solemnly a thousand times in his parish-church without being offended at them. Such is the force of habit, which familiarises the grossest absurdities to our reason, as it does the most disagreeable sensations to our senses.

TYPES,

Digitized by Google

TYPES, and figures, and prophecies are ſubjects on which the acute wits of divines have been much exerciſed, in order to ſhew a connection between the Old Teſtament and the New, and how one prepares us for and foretells the other. I ſhall deſcend into few particulars concerning them. There is no room for reaſoning about the two former. Their propriety or impropriety, aptneſs or unaptneſs, muſt appear to the underſtanding as ſoon as they are compared with the things typified or figured. Thus for example, and to mention no other, when St. AUSTIN * tells us, that the ark being made of wood, and having a length, an heighth and breadth, which anſwer to the proportions of the human body, and, therefore, ſignify a human body, it is plain that this veſſel prefigured the city of God, or the church, which is ſaved by that wood, on which the man JESUS CHRIST was hanged up; that his coming was foretold, and he came: the impropriety and unaptneſs of this type or figure muſt ſtrike you on the very firſt reflection.

MORE reaſoning and a longer proceſs of examination are neceſſary when prophecies are concerned. The meaning of them is always equivocal and obſcure: and it may be doubtful ſometimes whether

* Menſura ipſa longitudinis, altitudinis, latitudiniſque ejus, ſignificat corpus humanum . . . quae fit ſalva per lignum in quo pependit . . . homo JESUS CHRISTUS. Praenunciatus eſt venturus, et venit. De civ. Dei, lib. xv.

things

things were done, or recorded to be done, becauſe they had been, or ſeemed to have been, foretold; or whether they had been foretold becauſe they were to come to paſs. Of prophecies we have ſtore, both of ſuch as are applied to the Meſſiah, of ſuch as foretold what was to happen immediately to him, and to Jeruſalem, and of ſuch as remain, and muſt remain, till the conſummation of all things, unaccompliſhed. I ſhall not ſet my feet into this labyrinth, where nothing certain is to be found, and from whence it is not eaſy to get out. I ſhall be content to obſerve, that many queſtions are unreſolved, many difficulties unremoved, concerning the firſt kind of prophecies; and that men, even inſpired men, have thought ſometimes that they diſcovered prophecies, when they made them, and made them ſuch as could not be maintained with all the learning and all the ſubtilty they have beſtowed about them. It was for this reaſon, I ſuppoſe, that CLARKE omitted modeſtly the famous prophecy, "a virgin ſhall conceive and bear "a ſon," in the place where he enumerates thoſe that foretold the Meſſiah; tho' he was ſanguine enough to inſiſt on ſome of no leſs difficult application, as that "the ſceptre ſhall not depart from "Judah till SHILOH comes;" and on others that have had no accompliſhment, as that in the Pſalms, that God would "give him the heathen for his in-"heritance, and the utmoſt parts of the earth for "his poſſeſſion," which is become by the event more applicable to FOE or MAHOMET, than to the true Meſſiah.

IT

It may not be out of our way to obſerve here, that as the vague undetermined ſenſe, and the ambiguous dark expreſſion, of the Bible have led ſacred writers and others to ſuppoſe prophecies, applicable to CHRIST, where none ſuch were intended; ſo the mahometan doctors have taken this advantage to aſſume that their falſe prophet is plainly promiſed, both in the old and new covenant. They quote the text in Deuteronomy, where it is ſaid, that the Lord came, or manifeſted himſelf, from Sinai, and roſe up from Seir,* that he ſhined forth from mount Paran. In this paſſage they find the law given to MOSES, the goſpel to JESUS CHRIST, and the koran to MAHOMET: and this they ſupport by topographical proofs. Seir is, according to them, that extent of hills which run from the Red to the Dead Sea, cloſe to Jeruſalem. Paran is that mountain in the deſart of Arabia, near to Mecca, where MAHOMET received the firſt chapters of his impertinent book. I wonder theſe commentators have not obſerved further, that from the Lord's right hand there went a fiery law for them. This epithet could never be more properly applied. Your HOMER alludes to fire in his deſcriptions of battles. The devaſtations of war are compared by other poets to thoſe of fire; and the mahometan law might be called fiery at leaſt, as well as the moſaical. Theſe doctors bring two other quotations from the Pſalms. The firſt is, in our tranſlation, "Out of

* Chap. xxxiii. ver. 2.

"Zion

" Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has ſhined." * In the ſyriac, they ſay, it is, " God hath made a " crown of glory to ſhine out of Zion;" and they add, that the words, rendered " crown of glory," are in the original hilan mahmudan, by which the paſſage would be made to ſignify, God has ſent the domination of MAHOMET with ſplendor out of Zion. The ſecond is taken from the Pſalm which is called the Pſalm of SOLOMON, † and which deſcribes in the future tenſe all the glories of his reign. This our divines agree to be ſo; but, having aſſumed, no one knows why, that SOLOMON was a type of the Meſſiah, they aſſert that the prophecy looks forward to the ſpiritual reign of CHRIST, and that ſometimes one and ſometimes the other is meaned, with a ſtrange confuſion of images. The mahometan doctors fix the ſenſe of it by aſſerting, againſt Jews and Chriſtians both, that the arabic verſion employs the proper and uſual word Medina, where it is ſaid, that they of the city ſhall floriſh like graſs of the earth: after which they aſk, with an air of triumph, what other prophet, beſides MAHOMET, ever came out of Medina, or even of Arabia? They go further, and they aſſume that CHRIST himſelf foretold the coming of MAHOMET, when he ſaid, that, if he did not go, the Paraclet would not come; but that when he did go, he would ſend him ‡. They pretend that this paſſage was ſtill more honourable for their prophet; that CHRIST ſpoke of himſelf in it as of the precurſor of MAHOMET, and

* Pſ. l. 2. † Iſ. lxxii. ‡ St. JOHN xvi. 12.

that

that it has been corrupted. But ſtill the prophecy, they ſay, is ſufficiently clear, ſince Paraclet is in arabic Ahmed, and ſince Ahmed or Mahammed are the ſame.

ALL, that has been ſaid concerning attempts to explain and enforce revelation by reaſon, relates to internal proofs, as they are called, of the divine original of the ſcriptures. CLARKE, whom I follow, does not think fit to inſiſt on any external proofs, on ſuch as might eſtabliſh beyond all reaſonable doubt the antiquity, the genuineneſs, and the authority of the books themſelves:* and yet the leaſt prain of ſuch proof as this would outweigh all the volumes of problematical and futile reaſoning, that had been ſo tediouſly employed to give ſome colour to the other. He refers us indeed to the collection that we find in GROTIUS†, of many particulars contained in ſacred, and confirmed by profane hiſtory. But GROTIUS and he ſhould have ſeen that every one elſe would ſee the fallacy of this pretended proof. The concurrent teſtimony of cotemporary, diſintereſted, and unprejudiced authors is, no doubt, a principal foundation of the credibility of any hiſtory: and ſuch a teſtimony theſe men would have it thought that they produce, when they quote, with much pomp, egyptian, phenician, chaldean, indian, and greek traditions and hiſtories. But none of theſe were of ſuch authority; or if the moſt ancient of them, ſuch as SANCHONIATHON for inſtance, and

* Evid. p. 259. † De verit. rel. chriſt.

even

Digitized by Google

even others more modern, like BEROSUS, or ABYDENUS, or ERATOSTHENES, or MANETHO, were disinterested and unprejudiced in their history and chronology; yet it is certain that they, by whom alone these testimonies are conveyed to us, were so little of that character, JOSEPHUS and EUSEBIUS for instance, that their design in writing, however they blundered sometimes in the execution of it, was to make profane chronology and history appear conformable to those of the Bible at any rate. That they did so, every scholar knows, in some instances which make their authority justly precarious in every instance of this kind. But I am willing to suppose that these impure channels are pure, and that they have conveyed these anecdotes down to us just as they stood in the antient books, from which they are said to be taken. What will this concession prove? It will prove that there were various traditions, in a most remote antiquity, concerning the creation, the flood, and the destruction of Sodom, about ABRAHAM and other patriarchs, about DAVID, and other kings of the Jews. It will shew that the Phenicians, the Egyptians, the Israelites, and probably every one of the eastern nations, had their systems of traditions, whereof that of the Old Testament alone is come down to us entire. The same names, and many circumstances of the same events, must of course have been mentioned in all. But such a conformity proves nothing. As they agreed in some, they might differ in other particulars: and the whole tenor of those, that

are

Digitized by Google

are loſt, might be repugnant to one another, and to that of the Jews. ABRAHAM was a name famous in all of them. ISAAC was known to the Arabians as well as ISMAEL; and ISMAEL to the Jews as well as ISAAC: but they tell very different ſtories about the legitimacy, and rank, and favour with God, of the two brothers, as well as about the deſcent from them. In one of theſe, we find a genealogy down to CHRIST. In the other the Mahometans find a genealogy of all thoſe who were born with the ſigns of a prophet down to MAHOMET. I could ſet the fallacy of this ſort of proof, in general and in particular, as it is applied both to the Old Teſtament and to the New, in a ſtronger light; if I did not haſten back from this digreſſion to that which is more immediately my ſubject, in order to ſhew you a further abuſe of this manner of reaſoning, on which the abſurd pile of artificial theology has been erected, and is ſupported. The abuſe, I mean, is that whereby divines admit the firſt, the moſt plauſible, and the ſtrongeſt objection that atheiſm ever made to the exiſtence of God; form a ſort of partial alliance with the profeſſors of it, and aſſiſt them in undermining the fundamental article of all religion, which they hope vainly to maintain afterwards by the help of a few hypothetical props. This abuſe does not ariſe ſolely from the preſumption which has been ſpoken of, the preſumption of thoſe who think that the chriſtian revelation wants to lean on human reaſon, and to be explained and enforced by it; but from a falſe reaſoning, in which

Digitized by Google

philoſophers have indulged their pride, and their curioſity, ever ſince there was ſuch a thing as philoſophy in the world. Let us deſcend into a particular conſideration of this matter, and ſpeak of it a little at large.

XL.

AFTER pleading the cauſe of natural and revealed religion, I am now to plead that of God himſelf, if I may uſe the expreſſion of SENECA in his treatiſe De providentia, againſt divines and atheiſts in confederacy.

THAT chain of reaſoning, by which we arrive, from a knowledge of the phaenomena, at a knowledge of the author of nature, of a firſt intelligent cauſe of all things, ſelf-exiſtent and the fountain of all exiſtence, all-perfect, and the inimitable original of all perfections, has never been, and can never be, broken. How ſhould reaſon diſſolve a demonſtration reaſon has made by leading us from things perceived by ſenſe and by intuition to that exiſtence which cannot be ſo perceived? * The atheiſt cannot be ſaid properly to argue againſt the moſt evident, and in my apprehenſion the moſt comfortable, truth, which human reaſon demonſtrates. All he can do is to cavil at it: and thus far the aſſociation, between him and the theiſt, has been carried too generally in all ages.

* Ratio quae ex rebus perceptis ad id quod non percipiebatur adducit. Acad. quaeſt. L. ii.

IGNO-

Digitized by Google

IGNORANCE that was real, and knowledge that was fantaſtic, ſuperſtition, and philoſophy combined to create gods, whoſe exiſtence could not be demonſtrated. But theſe gods, theſe hypothetical deities, did not interfere with the one Supreme Being, even in the minds of thoſe who worſhipped them: "a rebus phyſicis tracta ratio ad commen-"titios et fictos deos." Theſe were the moſt antient, and, like the ſun, the firſt and principal, objects of adoration. They were the dii majorum gentium. But they were viſible and generated gods, as they are called by PLATO: and however confuſedly this appellation was employed in common uſe, the Θεοὶ were always diſtinguiſhed from ὁ Θεὸς and τὸ Θεῖον. The Timaeus diſtinguiſhes them ſufficiently; and PROCLUS, in his comment upon it, where he mentions the doubts and diſputes that aroſe about the many, affirms that the belief of one God was uniform. Even they who believed ſome, of the many, eternal, believed them ſo by an eternal creation or proceſſion from the one; and if equal in time, yet not ſo in the order of nature and cauſality, nor ſelf-exiſtent. CELSUS was a ſtrenuous polytheiſt, and yet, when he pleaded for the worſhip of demons, he aſſerted, "that the one true God is never to be neglected, "neither by day nor night, neither in public nor "private, neither in words nor actions; but that "our minds ought to be directed conſtantly to "him." In ſhort, when the pagan theiſts were called upon to explain themſelves, they made a

Digitized by Google

profeſſion of their faith eaſily reconciled to true theiſm: and the fathers of the church, who rejected, like EUSEBIUS, theſe profeſſions as thoſe of men who only denied what they were ſhamed from owning by chriſtianity, had a very ill grace; ſince they themſelves were every day employed to explain and alter old doctrines by new, and were nurſing up a ſort of polytheiſm, which became little different from that of the pagans, and which needs, at this hour, as much indulgence to make it paſs for any thing elſe.

THAT there were ſome men, who knew not God, in all ages, may be true; but the ſcandalous taſk of combating his exiſtence, under the maſk of theiſm, was reſerved for metaphyſicians and theologians. It was undertaken probably as ſoon as philoſophers, who profeſſed ſuch ſciences, aroſe. It was undertaken certainly in an unknown antiquity; for as early as the moſt antient, and eſpecially the moſt learned, nations appear to us, we ſee ſuch doctrines and inſtitutions eſtabliſhed as owe plainly their original to objections raiſed againſt the proceedings of divine providence. What were the OSIRIS and TYPHO of the Egyptians, the OROMAZES and ARIMANIUS of the magi, the good and bad planets of the Chaldaens, the Zeus and Hades of the Greeks, the Monas and Dyas of PYTHAGORAS, the concord and diſcord, or two principles, of other philoſophers; what were all theſe but ſo many inventions, piouſly deſigned to account for the mixture of good and evil, that there

Digitized by Google

there is in the world? To account for the ſuppoſed unjuſt diſtribution of them, other expedients had been found. Beſides a metempſychoſis, or tranſmigration of ſouls from the bodies of men into thoſe of birds, beaſts, fiſhes, and after a revolution of many ages into the bodies of men again, the Egyptians held an heaven and an hell, into one of which the good were to be received and to live with the gods, whilſt the wicked were tormented in the other. PYTHAGORAS and PLATO had learned this doctrine from them.* But the former thought to give it more weight by pretending to have gone in perſon to the infernal ſhades: and the latter quoted, for the ſame purpoſe, HERES of Pamphilia, who had been ſent from thence to relate what he had ſeen and heard there. It is worth while to mention the particulars related by him, in order to ſhew how much the antient atheiſts were perſuaded that nothing leſs, than the exiſtence of all mankind in a future ſtate, and a more exact diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments, could excuſe the aſſumed irregular and unjuſt proceedings of providence in this life, on which atheiſts founded an objection that the others admitted too eaſily. AEACUS, then, and MINOS and RHADAMANTHUS ſat in judgment in the field of truth, "in campo veritatis." All the ſouls of the dead were brought before this tribunal. There they were tried, and the ſeparation of the righteous from the wicked was made. The former were placed on the right hand, the latter on

* PLATO De rep. l. x.

Digitized by Google

the left: the former went upwards to live with the gods in heaven, the latter downwards to live with the furies in hell. Of these, however, a distinction was made. Such souls as were judged curable, and required only a little more purification, the animae sanabiles, were delivered from hell after a year of suffering; and for this purpose a review of souls was made annually. Let me observe, by the way, that the doctrine of purgatory is plainly proved by this doctrine, according to CLARKE's way of proving, and better than by a passage in one of the books of the Maccabees, to be agreeable to sound reason and the unprejudiced light of nature, in general: and that the particular circumstance of an annual review of souls favours extremely a fact which the franciscan monks asserted, and the council of Basle censured, the annual descent of their founder into purgatory; from whence he delivered, by a special privilege, and carried with him to heaven, the souls of all those of his own order.* What use may be made of these observations, I leave it to you to determine. But, I think, you will agree with me on the whole, that the cavils raised, on account of physical and moral evil, are as old as metaphysics and theology.

THEY, who arrived by proofs a posteriori at a demonstration of God's existence, might think very rationally that whatever discoveries they made

* Beatus FRANCISCUS ex divino privilegio quotannis ad purgatorium descendit, suosque omnes ad coelum deducit. SPOND. an. 1443.

further

Digitized by Google

further concerning his nature, his attributes, and his will, muſt be made by the ſame means; and that what could not be ſo diſcovered, could not be diſcovered at all. Thus men of common ſenſe might think: and by proceeding in this method they might be ſure of acquiring as much knowledge as they wanted, and be ſafe againſt falling into error; ſince to proceed in this method is to follow natural revelation, and, inſtead of employing our reaſon about the ſuggeſtions of imagination, to emply her about thoſe of nature, which are the ſuggeſtions of God himſelf. But we may be aſſured that there were in thoſe days, as there are in ours, men of uncommon ſenſe, who, ſetting themſelves far above the vulgar, proceeded on a very vulgar principle, and made themſelves the meaſure of all Being, of the Supreme Being among the reſt. When modern divines tell us that we are made after the image of God, they mean it with a regard to our intellectual ſyſtem: and they proceed in the very ſame manner with thoſe ancient divines who made God after their own image. To ſay the firſt is more decent, but the laſt is always done; for there can be no application from God, whom we do not know, to man. The application muſt be made, and it always is ſo, from man, whom we do know, to God.

When we contemplate the works of God
cum ſuſpicimus magni coeleſtia mundi
Templa ſuper, ſtelliſque micantibus aethera fixum,
Et venit in mentem lunae ſoliſque viarum;

Digitized by Google

they give us very clear and determined ideas of wiſdom and power, which we call infinite, becauſe they paſs, in the exerciſe of them, all the bounds of our conceptions. Thus far the reaſoner a poſteriori went formerly, and goes now; becauſe the phaenomena conduct him thus far, and give him theſe ideas with an invariable uniformity. But the reaſoners a priori have been never thus confined. As ſoon as they had proved to themſelves the exiſtence of a firſt intelligent cauſe of all things, which can be proved by the other method alone, they abandoned it: and having aſſumed that divine and human intelligence are the ſame, in kind at leaſt, they proceeded in all their reaſonings about the nature, moral attributes, and will of God, not only without regard to the phaenomena, but often in direct contradiction to them. In ſhort, no true theiſt ever aſſerted, with greater aſſurance, this undeniable truth, that every thing, which God has done, is for that very reaſon right, than theſe falſe theiſts have aſſerted the repugnancy of many things, in the conſtitution and government of the world, to the moral attributes, and even to the wiſdom, of God. God is, in their notion of him, nothing more than an infinite man. He knows as we know, is wiſe as we are wiſe, and moral as we are moral; but his knowledge, his wiſdom, and his morality are in their nature infinite, tho' they are not exerciſed alike, nor with a conſtant harmony, nor conſiſtency, in the production of all the phaenomena.

XLI.

Digitized by Google

XLI.

NO man has been more dogmatical on this head than CLARKE *. He is much ſcandaliſed at thoſe theiſts, among others, who being ſo abſurd as to imagine that goodneſs and juſtice are not the ſame in God, which they are in our ideas, but ſomething tranſcendent, think it is impoſſible we ſhould argue with any certainty about them. This opinion, he ſays, does not ſtand on any conſiſtent principles, and muſt finally recur to abſolute atheiſm. Now I own very freely, that the opinion is mine, and that it is one of thoſe which I think it impious to alter, "quæ deſeri a me, dum quidem ſpirare potero, "nefas judico." Far from apprehending that I ſhall be reduced to atheiſm by holding it, the doctor ſeems to me in ſome danger of being reduced to manifeſt abſurdity by holding the contrary opinion.

AFTER repeating, over and over, of all the moral attributes, that they are the ſame in God as they are in our ideas: and that he, who denies them to be ſo, may as well deny the divine phyſical attributes; the doctor inſiſts only on two of the former, on thoſe of juſtice and goodneſs. He was much in the right, to contract the generality of his aſſertion. The abſurdity of aſcribing temperance for inſtance, or fortitude, to God, would

* Evid. p. 26,

have

Digitized by Google

have been too groſs, and too viſible even to eyes that prejudice had blinded the moſt, But that of aſcribing juſtice and goodneſs to him according to our notions of them, might be better covered, and was enough for his purpoſe, though not leſs really abſurd.

" If juſtice and goodneſs be not the ſame in " God as in our ideas *, then we mean nothing " when we ſay that God is neceſſarily juſt and " good: and for the ſame reaſon, it may as well " be ſaid, that we know not what we mean, when " we affirm that he is an intelligent and wiſe " Being." Theſe are the doctor's own words: and ſurely they ſhew that great men in common eſtimation are ſometimes great triflers. When they, who are of his opinion, affirm that God is neceſſarily juſt and good, according to their preciſe notions of juſtice and goodneſs, they know indeed what they mean, and they mean very preſumptuouſly. When they, who are not of his opinion, ſay that God is juſt and good, they too have a meaning which is not leſs reaſonable for being more modeſt. They aſcribe all conceivable perfections to God, moral and phyſical, which can belong to a divine nature and to a Supreme Being: but they do not preſume to limit them to their conceptions, which is their crime with doctor Clarke. Every thing ſhews the wiſdom and power of God, conformably to our ideas of wiſdom and power, in the phyſical

* Evid. p. 26.

world

Digitized by Google

world and in the moral. But every thing does not ſhew, in like manner, the juſtice and goodneſs of God, conformably to our ideas of theſe attributes in either. The phyſical attributes, are in their nature more glaring, and leſs equivocal. The divine and the atheiſt, therefore, deny that to be juſt or good, which is not one or the other according to their ideas. The theiſt acknowledges whatever God has done to be juſt and good in itſelf, though it does not appear ſuch in every inſtance, conformably to his ideas of juſtice and goodneſs. He imputes the difference to the defect of his ideas, and not to any defect of the divine attributes. Where he ſees them, he owns them explicitely: where he does not ſee them, he pronounces nothing about them. He is as far from denying them, as he is from denying the wiſdom and power of God. In every caſe he knows what he means, and his meaning is in every caſe rational, pious, and modeſt.

Will the divine ſay, that he does not deny the juſtice and goodneſs of God, becauſe he proves them, in general, a priori; and that when he denies them in particular inſtances, he only denies the complete exerciſe of them in this world, becauſe that is reſerved for another? When he proves then the juſtice and goodneſs of God, he proves them as he could not prove even his intelligence, that is a priori: and when he denies them, his denial is abſolute; unleſs an hypotheſis, which may be denied on much better grounds, for

Digitized by Google

for we ſpeak here of reaſon, not of revelation, be true. But what is this proof a priori? Does it prove that juſtice and goodneſs, though they are ſo connected with the phyſical attributes, that when we aſcribe one we are obliged, by neceſſary conſequence, to aſcribe the other to the Supreme Being, are yet ſo diſtinct that they may be ſeparated in the exerciſe of them, and that either of them may act as independently of his wiſdom, as of one another? If this be ſaid, they who ſay it may aſſume, in conſequence, that the Supreme Being is ſometimes partial, inſtead of being always juſt, and ſometimes evil, inſtead of being always good; which hypotheſis might have ſaved the antients the trouble of inventing that of the two principles, and ſets the reaſoning of ſuch a divine as CLARKE on principles as little conſiſtent as that of an atheiſt. Does the argument a priori prove that the juſtice, and goodneſs, and wiſdom, and power of God are ſo intimately connected, and are ſo much the ſame by nature, that they cannot be ſeparated in the exerciſe of them? In this caſe, his natural attributes abſorb the moral. The will of God is not determined, ſometimes by one moral attribute, and ſometimes by another, like that of man; but by a concurrence of them all with his wiſdom, in every act of it. God is then infinitely wiſe: he does always that which is fitteſt to be done. That, which is fitteſt to be done, is always juſt and good, and the diſpute is over,

No, ſays the divine. However you diſtinguiſh, or however you blend the divine attributes, there

is

Digitized by Google

is a rule, according to which the exercise of these attributes is determined, and must be characterised. This rule is the reason of things, resulting from their eternal relations, which are such as they appear to be to the understandings of all intelligent beings. God appeals to this rule; we have a right to judge him by it: and therefore, when he appears neither just nor good a posteriori, tho' we know him to be so a priori, we must have recourse to some hypothesis or other, in order to reconcile the exercise of his attributes to this rule. "Quo teneam protea nodo?" It is hard to follow men, from supposition to supposition, through all the mazes of metaphysical theology. There is no end of it neither: and if I shewed CLARKE, that the understandings of all mankind, his own among the rest, are extremely apt to understand things to be what they are not, that they are imperfect and depraved, and that his rule * of judging God by man is, therefore, to the last degree impertinent, on this account, as well as on many others; if all this was shewn, I say, it would not serve to silence men, who seek nothing more than to maintain the honour of the gown by having the last word in every dispute. We shall do better, therefore, to go as far back as we can to the origin of this dispute, where we shall find, if I mistake not, that as it is carried on, so it was founded, on a previous question or two, miserably begged on one side, and as foolishly granted on the other.

* Dem. p. 125.

THE

THE argument, by which EPICURUS endeavoured to prove that there could be no God, ſince there was ſuch a thing as evil in the world, is ſtated more ſtrongly, than it is refuted, by LACTANTIUS in his book De ira Dei. AUL. GELLIUS quotes a paſſage of Q. CLAUDIUS the annaliſt, wherein the gods are condemned for the iniquitous diſtribution of good and evil:* and PLUTARCH introduces his dialogue, concerning the delay of divine juſtice in puniſhing the crimes of men, by ſuppoſing that EPICURUS, who was juſt gone out of the company, had poured forth a whole torrent of blaſphemy againſt the providence of God for this delay. In the third book of the nature of the gods, all the powers of eloquence are called forth, in a ſprightly declamation, to exaggerate phyſical and moral evil, and to conclude as directly, as an academician could conclude, from their exiſtence and from the aſſumed unjuſt diſpenſations of providence, that there is no God. Theſe inſtances, to which I refer you, are ſufficient. They are antient themſelves, and they are the copies of others much more antient. But as bold as the charge is, and as high as it was founded, the belief of God's exiſtence could not have been ſhaken by it in the minds of men, nor could they have been reduced, as they have been from the moſt early ages, to defend a demonſtrated truth

* Haec maxime verſatur deorum iniquitas, quod deteriores ſint incolumiores; neque optimum quempiam inter nos ſinunt diurnare. L. xvii. c. 2.

by

by evaſions, by ſophiſms, by hypotheſes, and by all the low expedients that are employed to palliate error, if theiſts had not been ſeduced many ways into a confederacy with atheiſts.

THE caſe before us affords a ſignal example, the moſt ſignal that it is poſſible to imagine, of the danger we run, whenever we ſoar, in the vague of abſtract reaſoning, too far from the phaenomena of our ſyſtem. To be real, our knowledge muſt riſe in it. To be uſeful, it muſt be applicable to it. But philoſophers appear often, like comets, that riſe out of our ſyſtem, juſt croſs it, diſorder it, and go out of it again. The general obſervation has been inculcated throughout all I have written; and it has been juſt now applied particularly to the proceeding of thoſe reaſoners a priori, who either became atheiſts themſelves, or who ſupported the cavils of thoſe who were ſuch, till theſe cavils became arguments founded on theiſtical principles, and therefore difficult, I might ſay impoſſible, for thoſe, who had eſtabliſhed theſe principles, to anſwer. A ſelf-exiſtent Being, the firſt cauſe of all things, infinitely powerful, and infinitely wiſe, is the God of natural theology: and we may advance, without any fear of being diſproved, that as the whole ſyſtem of the univerſe bears teſtimony to this great truth, ſo the whole ſyſtem of natural religion reſts on it, and requires no broader foundation. Theſe ſyſtems are God's ſyſtems. That of our knowledge is given and limited, that of our duty is preſcribed and revealed,

Digitized by Google

vealed, by him. Both are adequate to one another; both are commenſurate: we have no knowledge beyond our duty, nor any duty beyond our knowledge.

WHAT now has artificial theology pretended to add to that knowledge of the deity, which natural theology communicates? It pretends to connect, by very problematical reaſonings a priori, moral attributes, ſuch as we conceive them, and ſuch as they are relatively to us, with the phyſical attributes of God; though there be no ſufficient foundation for this proceeding in the phaenomena of nature: nay, though the phaenomena are, as it has been ſaid already, in ſeveral caſes repugnant. God is juſt, and good, and righteous, and holy, as well as powerful and wiſe. Man is made in the image of God: he is little lower than the angels, or inferior gods in the platonic ſcheme: Nay, he is ſuperior to them: there is no intermediate being between God and man in the ſtoical ſcheme. "Homini praeſtare quis poſſit niſi Deus?" was the queſtion of CHRYSIPPUS: and SENECA aſſumes a friendſhip, a neceſſary relation, a likeneſs, between God and good men. The good man is the diſciple of God; he emulates God; he is the true offſpring of God. *

SUCH were the notions of antient theiſts, and on ſuch notions it was natural for them to aſſume

* .... Amicitia eſt .... imo etiam neceſſitudo et ſimilitudo .... diſcipulus ejus, aemulatorque, et vera progenies. De provid.

that

Digitized by Google

that this world was made for man; and that the Supreme Being could have no other motive to make so noble a creature, except that of communicating happiness to him. The atheists saw their advantage. They saw that artificial theology gave them the means of unravelling that thread which natural theology had spun, and of playing the assumed, against the demonstrated attributes. They might ask, as they did, if God be good and holy, how comes it that there is any such thing as evil in the world? If he be just and righteous, how comes it that the best men have often the greatest share of this evil? The pagan theists were extremely puzzled how to answer these questions so as to prevent the conclusion, there is no God: and therefore they had recourse generally to the hypothesis of two co-existing principles; and thought, like PLUTARCH,* that it was better to abridge the power of JUPITER, than to impute to him that he caused or suffered evil. When they had not this recourse, they talked mere nonsense, figurative, sublime, metaphysical; but nonsense still. The Stoics, those zealous assertors of the Supreme God, and defenders of his providence, had all a tang of enthusiasm, or they all affected it. DEMETRIUS was of the first sort, no doubt: and so might SENECA be, who quotes him, and who took much pains to work himself, and his friend LUCILIUS, up to the same temper of mind. At least his treatise about providence is a rhapsody of parodox and

* Adv. stoicos.

Digitized by Google

enthuſiaſm, ingenious, affecting, and little to the purpoſe. I have quoted LACTANTIUS* for the argument of EPICURUS. I might quote him for ſuch an anſwer to it as deſerves to have it's place among the unexpected ſayings, the inopinata, of the Stoics, and no where elſe. God can, but he will not, according to this father, take away the evil that is in the world; becauſe if we did not know evil, we could not know good .... "niſi prius "malum agnoverimus, nec bonum poterimus ag- "noſcere;" and becauſe there is much more advantage and pleaſure in the enjoyment of that wiſdom by which alone we know the latter, than there is trouble and pain in the evil we ſuffer. "Plus "boni ac jucunditatis in ſapientia, quam in malis "moleſtiae." Thus the father proves that all things were made for the ſake of man, evil as well as good. "Conſtat igitur omnia propter hominem "propoſita, tam mala, quam etiam bona."

THAT man is the final cauſe of the whole creation, and that God could have no other motive to make him, except that of communicating happineſs to him, are propoſitions aſſumed by all the antient and modern theiſts, thoſe of paganiſm and thoſe of chriſtianity. Love was the firſt or chief of the gods. Love was the firſt principle of things. Love of his creatures in idea determined God to draw them forth into exiſtence. That God loves us even to fondneſs, "uſque in delicias amamur,†" would ſuch a writer, as SENECA, ſay. That God

* De ira Dei. c. 13. † SEN. De benef. l. iv.

love

Digitized by Google

loves us heartily, is the language of such a writer as CLARKE. Such assumptions as have been mentioned, founded on such notions as these, were inculcated in all ages by artificial theology: and could not fail to be so with success; because they flattered human nature, who is besides her own flatterer and seducer, "blanda adulatrix et quasi "lena sui." The production of infinite power were confined long to the system of one planet alone, and the exercise of infinite wisdom to the affairs of one animal chiefly. When further discoveries opened by degrees a more noble view of the universe, and experience and reflection obliged men to think, on many occasions, a little more modestly of their own importance, if physics mortified them, metaphysics raised their spirits again. Fantastic knowledge became as indulgent to self-love, and to the pride of the human heart, as real ignorance had ever been: and although some of the puerilities and superstitions, which had prevailed in the nonage of philosophy, were laid aside, yet some of these, and other opinions as extravagant and as inconsistent as these, were taught in the schools of theology. They who came theists, and they who came atheists, out of these schools, triumphed equally: the former, in those doctrines that raised very nearly the human up to the divine nature; the latter, in those that debased the divine moral character of God as low as human ideas of moral perfections. Theology furnished arms on both sides. The theist confirmed men in the belief of a Supreme Being, and set their passions on

his ſide, when he repreſented the predilection of this Being for them, who were alone, or in common with the generated gods, the final cauſe of the whole creation, and who were made to exiſt, that there might be rational and proper objects of God's munificence in the world. The atheiſt proceeded, on the ſame theiſtical principles, to ſhake this belief of a Supreme Being. That they muſt be true, if there was ſuch a Being, he aſſerted as loudly as the divine. But he worked himſelf up to doubt, and he ſet, in his turn, the paſſions of men on his ſide, by declaiming pathetically againſt the phyſical and moral evil that abounds in the world; by cenſuring the diſpenſations of providence in it, and by ſhewing that many of the phænomena are not reconcileable to our ideas of holineſs, of goodneſs, of juſtice, and at the ſame time of wiſdom and power. He came at laſt to deny that there was any God; becauſe he could not diſcover ſuch a metaphyſical and moral god as artificial theology had imagined.

The arguments of the atheiſt were ſo ſtrong ad hominem, for they are ſuch in no other manner, that the theiſt found himſelf obliged to ſeek the uſual refuge of philoſophers who affect to dogmatiſe beyond their knowledge, and even beyond all their real, their clear, and well determined ideas; the refuge, I mean, of hypotheſes, by which they endeavour to evade what they cannot anſwer. That of two principles was the refuge of pagans from time immemorial, and of a famous ſect of heretics

Digitized by Google

heretics in the chriſtian church. That of the fall of man, and of the continued malice of the firſt tempter, the old ſerpent, who cauſed it, was the refuge of orthodox chriſtians. By theſe they hoped to account for the introduction of phyſical and moral evil, conſiſtently with the propoſitions aſſumed, "that the world was made for man, and "man to be happy in it." By the hypotheſis of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, both pagans and chriſtians hoped to reconcile the diſpenſations of providence in this life, to the moral attributes of God, and to the rule of his conduct, which they aſſumed likewiſe to be the ſame in him, as they are in human ideas.

THE hypotheſis of two principles, ſelf-exiſting, infinite, oppoſite, is full of abſurdities. But abſtract it from theſe, and conſider it only as it accounts for the introduction of evil, and it will appear much more plauſible, tho' it be not more reaſonable, than that of the fall of ADAM, and the malice of the devil. The firſt ſaves, or ſeems to ſave, all the attributes of the good God. They all exiſt in him, as the theiſt conceives them. They are all exerted by him, as the theiſt aſſumes. But he is oppoſed by a coequal bad principle: and that mixture of good and evil, which appears in the frame and government of the world, ariſes from the perpetual ſtruggle of theſe rival powers. The laſt is full of abſurdities likewiſe: but abſtract it from theſe, and ſtill you will find that it ſaves the divine attributes in no reſpect. It anſwers no pur-

Digitized by Google

poſe in oppoſition to atheiſm; and it could be ſo applied in good earneſt, whatever other purpoſe it has been made to anſwer, by no theiſts who underſtood their own hypotheſis, and the objections of their adverſaries. The goodneſs, and even the wiſdom, of God lye juſt as much expoſed for ſuffering an inferior being, his creature and a creature in actual rebellion, to baffle the deſigns it is aſſumed that he had, as they would lye, if theſe deſigns were acknowledged to have been imperfectly executed by him. The ſeverity with which he puniſhed our firſt parents for a fault, which he foreknew that they would commit when he abandoned their free will to the temptation of committing it, for there would be too much horror in ſuppoſing them predeſtinated to commit the fault; this ſeverity, I ſay, and much more that which has been exerciſed on the whole race of mankind, who ſhare the puniſhment, tho' they had no ſhare in the crime, cannot be reconciled to our ideas of juſtice. The introduction of phyſical and moral evil, therefore, could not be imputed more really to the Supreme Being independently of this hypotheſis, than he is made the author of them by it, with the aggravating circumſtance of puniſhing the innocent for what he permitted, in one ſenſe of the word, the guilty to do.

XLII.

Digitized by Google

XLII.

THE diſpenſations of providence, in the diſtribution of good and evil, ſtand in no need of any hypotheſis to juſtify them: and if they did, that of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments would be inſufficient. Theſe two propoſitions may be made, I think, very evident: and I ſhall endeavour to make them ſo, before I quit the ſubject. Reaſon will neither deny, nor affirm, that there is to be a future ſtate: and the doctrine of rewards and puniſhments in it has ſo great a tendency to enforce civil laws, and to reſtrain the vices of men, that reaſon, who cannot decide for it, on principles of natural theology, will not decide againſt it, on principles of good policy. Let this doctrine reſt on the authority of revelation. A theiſt, who does not believe the revelation, can have no objection to the doctrine in general. But even a theiſt, who does believe the revelation, may refuſe to admit the doctrine on the principles on which it is eſtabliſhed by divines, and may diſapprove the uſe they make of it in ſeveral reſpects.

THE hypotheſes, that have been crayoned out, are the chief pillars of artificial theology. Some of them were aſſumed in compliance with the overweening notions of their own worth and importance, which men are prone to entertain, and by which they raiſe themſelves up to the imaginary heights that have been mentioned: tho' the

Digitized by Google

diſtance between our friend GAY's fly, in his fables, and the infinite ſelf-exiſtent Being, is not a whit greater than that between this Being and SOCRATES or St. PAUL, the two apoſtles of the gentiles. Other hypotheſes were invented to maintain theſe: and by tagging one hypotheſis to another, men deviated at laſt ſo far from natural theology, and raiſed ſo much confuſion in their notions about it, that they had no means left of returning to the firſt principle of this theology, nor of clearing to common apprehenſion a little of this confuſion, but thoſe of another hypotheſis. Strange effect of theological ſkill! It makes a demonſtrated truth depend on a precarious ſuppoſition. If there is not a future ſtate, God is neither good nor juſt according to our ideas of goodneſs and juſtice, in his diſpenſations. If he is not good and juſt, according to our ideas of theſe moral attributes, neither can the phyſical attributes, ſuch as infinite wiſdom and power, belong to him: and a being, who has none of theſe, is not God. But there is a future ſtate. Thus divines have dared to argue: and I am juſtified in ſaying, that they betray the cauſe of God to the atheiſt, when they join with him in ſo many points, that nothing remains to be oppoſed to him, in defence of God's exiſtence, but the problematical and futile reaſonings they employ to prove a future ſtate.

WE are apt to carry the judgments we make into extremes, and the characters we give into pane-

Digitized by Google

panegyrics or satires. The examples of this kind are without number: but none are so remarkable as those, which we find in writers, antient and modern, concerning the human nature. No creature is so miserable, in some descriptions, nor so necessitous, as man. He comes into the world bemoaning his fate. He grows up, and passes through the human state, exposed to many wants and bodily infirmities, unknown to the brute creation. You remember, no doubt, those fine verses in LUCRETIUS *:

Tum porro puer, ut saevis projectus ab undis
Navita, nudus humi jacet infans, indigus omni
Vitali auxilio. . . . . .
Vagituque locum lugubri complet, ut aequum est
Cui tantum in vita restet transire malorum.
At variae crescunt pecudes et.

No creature is to be compared with man in other descriptions, and in a contrary sense. He was made of earth; but this earth was impregnated with celestial seeds, if you will take OVID's † word for it.

. . . . recens tellus, seductaque nuper ab alto
Aethere, cognati retinebat semina coeli.

He was made in the image of the gods, and his very form denoted his divine original.

* Lib. v. † Metam. L. i.

Digitized by Google

Os homini ſublime dedit, cœlumque tueri
Juſſit &c.

Some of theſe writers degrade even the human mind, and that intelligence and reaſon wherein we triumph. PLATO, who, in one mood, raiſes man up to the contemplation of the abſtract forms of all things, ſends him in another for inſtruction to the beaſts of the field: and the Hoſpes in the Politicus reckons their converſation among the means of improvement in philoſophy and the knowledge of nature which men enjoyed under the reign of SATURN. MONTAGNE, another proſe-poet, deals with man as divines deal with God; and having drawn down human nature as low as he could, he raiſes that of ſome other animals ſo high, that he aſcribes a ſenſe of religion to elephants, and repreſents them deep in meditation and contemplation before the riſing ſun, and attentive, at certain hours of the day, to perform certain acts of devotion. He took this from PLINY *: and he might have added, on the ſame authority, among other excellencies, that they underſtood the language of their country, loved glory, and were great moraliſts; a commendation ſeldom due to men, "quae etiam in homine rara." But COTTA, in the third book Of the nature of the gods, goes ſo far as to aſſert that human reaſon, far from being an advantage, is a diſadvantage, to man, the worſt preſent that heaven could make him, and one of the plagues of human life.

* Lib. viii. c. 1.

"Peſ-

" Peſtifera multis, admodum paucis ſalutaris." The academician complains that it is bountifully and largely beſtowed, " tam munifice et tam large " dari." But the whole chorus of theiſtical philoſophers and of divines boaſt it to be the diſtinguiſhing gift of God to man, that which gives him a pre-eminence and a right of command over his fellow creatures. OVID * calls him for this reaſon, " ſanctius his animal;" and the Stoic, whom COTTA anſwered, had not only diſtinguiſhed him from other animals, but coupled him with the gods. The ſole beings, who have reaſon, are gods and men. . . . " dii et homines " quibus profecto nihil eſt melius," In a word, metaphyſicians have refined and ſubtiliſed their diſcourſes on this favorite theme into a jargon which has no meaning at all, or a blaſphemous meaning: and they would ſtand juſtly expoſed to the ridicule of common ſenſe, if common ſenſe could reſolve to laugh at blaſphemy. There have been thoſe who taught that the human is a portion of the divine ſoul. Others † have been more modeſt, and have allowed that the former is a created being, " creatura quae mens dicitur " rationalis," but a being of ſo high an order, that there is none ſuperior, except the Supreme Being, and that theſe two are more cloſely and intimately united than the human ſoul is to the body it informs.

THERE is a middle point between theſe extremes, where the truth lies: and he who ſeeks

* Ib. † PORPHYRY, PLOTINUS, St. AUSTIN, MALBRANCHE.

it

it may find it. He will not find what the principle of divine, or even of human intelligence is. But he will ſoon find that the diſtance between them, whatever they are, is ſo immenſe, as to admit in reality no degree of compariſon. He will find, on the other hand, many ſuch degrees between the human intelligence and that of various animals. He may be induced perhaps to think that intellectual faculties and corporeal ſenſes, of the ſame and of different kinds, are communicated, in ſome proportion or other, to the whole race of animals: but he will be ſtill conſcious of his ſuperiority, as they themſelves are moſt apparently, ſuch of them at leaſt as know mankind; not the ſagacious elephant alone, who ſubmits to his ſervice, but the lion and the tyger, who make him occaſionally their prey.

MAN is then the principal inhabitant of this planet, a being ſuperior to all the reſt. But will it follow from hence, that the ſyſtem, wherein this planet rolls, or even this planet alone, was made for the ſake of man? Will it follow that infinite wiſdom had no other end in making man, than that of making an happy creature? Surely not. The ſuppoſitions are arbitrary, and the conſequences abſurd. There is no pretence to ſay that we have any more right to complain of the evils which affect our ſtate, than our fellow creatures of the evils which affect theirs, or which are common to both. Many of them have plainly ſome foreſight of the future, and of phyſical

ſical effects, more than we have. But all of them feel the preſent. Becauſe God has given us intellectual powers ſuperior to theirs, to them more inſtinct perhaps, to us more reaſon certainly, is he cruel and unjuſt becauſe he has not given us invulnerable and impeccable natures? By reaſon we learn to avoid, or to ſoften, or to remedy, many evils to which we are expoſed. By reaſon we ought to learn to bear ſuch as can be neither avoided, nor ſoftened, nor cured. If we employ our reaſon only to aggravate theſe evils in our imaginations, and to complain more loudly, far from having a better right to do ſo, we are on this very account juſt ſo much the more impertinent and abſurd.

The whole tribe of divines aſſert, that the goodneſs of God required he ſhould make the world for the ſake of man, and man purpoſely to make an happy creature. Thoſe among them, who riſe higher in metaphyſics, aſſert "that God can act "for himſelf alone, and can create rational beings "for no reaſon but that of being known and loved "by them *." Now I, who know juſt as much of this matter as all or any of theſe dogmatical perſons, deny, on my own authority, what they affirm, on theirs; and, whilſt they pretend arrogantly to demonſtrate, will preſume modeſtly and diffidently to gueſs. What they ſay, hangs ill together: I leave it to them to reconcile, among

* Vid. Malb. Preface to the Recherche, &c.

a mul-

a multitude of other inconſiſtencies; and ſhall only obſerve, on the latter part, ſince we reaſon on human ideas, for we have no others whereon to reaſon; that they who advance it entertain a very falſe notion of beneficence. An heathen moraliſt would have taught them better. No one confers a benefit, who has himſelf and his own intereſt and ſatisfaction alone in view; "Si una dandi cauſa "eſt ſe intueri ac commodum ſuum, illud non "beneficium ſed foenus eſt." From hence SENECA * concludes, that all the benefits we receive from God, are truly benefits; ſince God can reap no advantage to himſelf in beſtowing them, and would, therefore, beſtow none, if utility to himſelf could be his motive. "Nam ſi una beneficii "dandi cauſa ſit dantis utilitas, nulla autem ex "nobis utilitas Deo ſperanda eſt, nulla Deo dandi "beneficii cauſa eſt."

But the former part of what is aſſerted on this occaſion by divines requires much more diſcourſe. They, who aſſert that man and the happineſs of man were the final cauſes of the creation, ſeem to have ideas no better determined of goodneſs, than the others of beneficence; for if there be not a certain proportion kept in the exerciſe of it, the ſeeming goodneſs of the heart is really the weakneſs of the mind. You ſee at once what numberleſs inſtances might be produced to exemplify this truth. Let me aſk now the greateſt flatterers of human nature, what proportion there is between

* Lib. iv.

the

the excellencies of it, and the goodneſs of God, that ſhould determine his infinite wiſdom to judge it eſſential to his goodneſs, when he reſolved to make man, to make a planet the more for the habitation of this ideal creature? The habitation is fit for him, and he is fitted to live in it. He could not exiſt in any other. But will it follow, that the planet was made for him, not he for the planet? The aſs would be ſcorched in Venus or Mercury, and be frozen in Jupiter or Saturn. Will it follow that this temperate planet was made for him, to bray and to eat thiſtles in it?

But I hear the divine reply, that man is a rational being, far ſuperior to the brute creation, and alone more worthy, than all of them, to be the final cauſe of the world he and they inhabit. That he alone has reaſon, may be too much to grant, ſince ſeveral of the faculties, in the exerciſe of which it conſiſts, are exerciſed by other animals, as every man, who is not Carteſian enough to believe more than Des Cartes believed himſelf, muſt allow. But whether the difference of that, which is called reaſon in man, and the intelligence of other animals, be in kind or in degree only, one way or other certain it is, that his ſuperiority over them is very real and very great, according to all our ideas of order. It was this conſideration, and this partial compariſon of him with the creatures of his own ſyſtem, that made the human paſs for the firſt of all rational natures, after the divine, among thoſe who had no ſuſpicion

Digitized by Google

tion of any others. Such were the narrow and confined ideas, which it appears by sacred as well as profane philosophy, that all the ancients entertained of the works of God. Modern discoveries in astronomy have presented them to us in a more noble scene. We cannot doubt, that numberless worlds and systems of worlds compose this amazing whole, the universe; and as little, I think, that the planets, which roll about our sun, or those which roll about a multitude of others, are inhabited by living creatures fit to be the inhabitants of them. When we have this view before our eyes, can we be stupid or impertinent and vain enough to imagine, that we stand alone or foremost among rational created beings; we, who must be conscious, unless we are mad and have lost the use of our reason, of the imperfection of our reason? Shall we not be persuaded rather, that as there is a gradation of sense and intelligence here from animal beings imperceptible to us, for their minuteness, without the help of microscopes and even with them, up to man, in whom, though this be their highest stage, sense and intelligence stop short and remain very imperfect; so there is a gradation from man, through various forms of sense, intelligence, and reason, up to beings who cannot be known by us because of their distance from us, and whose rank in the intellectual system is even above our conceptions? This system, as well as the corporeal, that is, the whole physical or natural system, for such the two properly are, must have been alike present to the divine mind before

before he made them to exiſt. If we aſſume, therefore, that he made this world for the ſake of man, we muſt aſſume a fortiori that he made every other world for the ſake of the rational inhabitants he deſigned to place in it.

Now it ſeems to me to follow from this hypotheſis very abſurdly, that one of theſe ſyſtems was made in mere ſubſerviency to the other: whereas it is certainly agreeable to the cleareſt and moſt diſtinct ideas we are able to frame of the proceedings of infinite wiſdom, to believe that each of them was made in ſome degree of ſubſerviency, and the animal ſyſtem perhaps in the greateſt, to the other; and that both of them were made on ſome greater motive, and for ſome greater purpoſe, whatever theſe were, than either. It might be obſerved, as another abſurdity, that according to this hypotheſis the whole univerſe was made for ſome minute parts of it; and that the divine architect of nature proceeded in an unnatural method, making the whole relatively to theſe, inſtead of making theſe and all the other parts relatively to the whole. But I chuſe rather to paſs it over, and to obſerve that the hypotheſis I oppoſe is not only unreaſonable in ſpeculation, but evidently contradicted by the phaenomena. Nothing in truth can be ſo prepoſterous as the conduct of the divine and atheiſt appears to be, whilſt they deplore the miſerable ſtate of mankind, and the evils that abound in a world which they aſſume was made for the ſake of mankind.

Digitized by Google

BOTH of them reaſon a priori from aſſumed moral attributes of the divinity. So they call their method of reaſoning: and ſuch it is in a falſe ſenſe. It cannot be ſuch in a true one; ſince their ideas of theſe attributes are very human ideas, applied arbitrarily to the divine nature, not founded in any knowledge of it that they have really. No matter. They have accuſtomed men to this abſurd impoſition, and they proceed. Both of them pretend to be led, from propoſition to propoſition, down to their different concluſions. But the truth is, that they have their different concluſions from the firſt in view. The premiſes, wherein they concur ſo amicably, are plainly contrived to eſtabliſh ſuch notions of the moral attributes of God, as ſhall appear repugnant to what we ſee, and feel, and know, when they are applied to the conſtitution of the world and to the ſtate of mankind in it: whereas it is from this conſtitution and this ſtate alone that we can acquire any ideas of the divine attributes, or a right to affirm any thing about them. When they have done this, a COLLINS concludes, that there is no God; and a CLARKE, that there is a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments.

LET us proceed in another method, argue from knowledge, not from imagination, and advance nothing more than the former will juſtify. The former will juſtify enough to refute abundantly the two allies.

XLIII.

Digitized by Google

XLIII.

THE demonſtration of God's exiſtence is founded in knowledge, and purſued with intuitive certainty through every ſtep of it. This the divine will admit; and this the atheiſt is ſo little able to deny, that he has recourſe to cavil, as it has been ſaid already, and endeavours vainly to unravel the thread he cannot break. I aſſume, therefore, nothing more than what is proved, when I aſſert that the Supreme Being is infinitely wiſe, as well as powerful: and if he be infinitely wiſe, I need not ſtand to prove that he always knows, and always does, that which is fitteſt to be done. To chuſe the beſt end, and to proportion the means to it, is the very definition of wiſdom. Two things are then evident. One, that, ſince infinite wiſdom determined to call into exiſtence every being that does exiſt, and to conſtitute that univerſal ſyſtem, which we call the ſyſtem of nature, it was right and fit that infinite power ſhould be exerciſed for this purpoſe. The other, that, ſince infinite wiſdom not only eſtabliſhed the end, but directed the means, the ſyſtem of the univerſe muſt be neceſſarily the beſt of all poſſible ſyſtems: which it could not be, nor even a conſiſtent ſcheme, unleſs the whole was the final cauſe of every part, and no one nor more parts the final cauſes of the whole. The univerſe is an immenſe aggregate of ſyſtems. Every one of theſe, if we may judge by our own, contains ſeveral; and every one of theſe

Digitized by Google

again, if we may judge by our own, is made up of a multitude of different modes of being, animated and inanimated, thinking and unthinking, rational and irrational; different natures deſigned for different purpoſes, but all concurring in that of one common ſyſtem: as we diſcern in too many inſtances not to have reaſon to believe it in all. Juſt ſo it is with reſpect to the various ſyſtems, and ſyſtems of ſyſtems, that compoſe the univerſe. As diſtant as they are, and as different as we may imagine them to be, they are all tied together by relations and connections, by gradations and dependencies. The great material parts of our ſolar ſyſtem act on one another in more ways than philoſophy has been yet able to diſcover; and that of comets is not, perhaps, the only communication that other ſyſtems have with ours. Unthinking matter is diſperſed in various forms throughout the univerſe: and we ſee a gradation of them in the world we inhabit, from ſtones and other inert bodies, up to vegetables and ſuch as have in themſelves, however inanimate, a natural, tho' not ſpontaneous, activity. So may we believe moſt reaſonably, that various forms of thinking ſubſtance, or the faculties of ſenſe and thought in various degrees, are diſperſed likewiſe throughout the univerſe. We obſerve a gradation of them here, and we may well perſuade ourſelves that there is a gradation of them through various ranks of beings, from the loweſt degrees in our world to the higheſt in ſome other.

Digitized by Google

I PRETEND not to dogmatiſe: but without having ſo much preſumption I may ſay, that the notions here advanced ſeem much more conformable to thoſe of a Supreme Being, and to all our ideas of order, than the contrary. They are probable in ſpeculation, and the appearances of things are favourable to them: whilſt the hypotheſis that aſſumes the world, and did formerly aſſume the whole univerſe, made for man, and man ſolely to be happy, is not founded in reaſon, and is contradicted by experience. By the conſtitution of the material, and by that of the intellectual world, more dependent on the former perhaps than we are willing to believe, the human race is expoſed to various evils, permanent and contingent, phyſical and moral. Of this philoſophers have complained in all ages. This they could not reconcile to the goodneſs and juſtice of a God, ſuch as they conceived him, nor on their principles: and therefore, they cut the knot by denying him, or threw themſelves into an endleſs labyrinth of diſputation by the acknowledgement of him. But on ſuch principles as are here laid down, and in the truth of things moſt certainly, there is no ground for complaint, and there is abundant cauſe to give thanks. Tho' this world, and much more the univerſe, were not made for the ſake of man, and tho' infinite wiſdom contrived, and infinite power executed, the ſtupendous work for ſome nobler end, and ſome greater purpoſe, than the advantage of one poor vain mortal creature; yet has not

Digitized by Google

the care of man been neglected in it. "In prima "illa conſtitutione," ſays SENECA * ſpeaking of the world as the work of the gods, "cum univerſa "diſponerent, etiam noſtra viderunt, rationem- "que hominis habuerunt:" which opinion, ſo little conſiſtent with the doctrine he teaches elſe-where, is far more reaſonable. We labor hard, we complicate various means, to arrive at one end: and ſeveral ſyſtems of conduct are often employed by us to bring about ſome one paultry purpoſe. But God neither contrives, nor executes, like man. His means are ſimple, his purpoſes various: and the ſame ſyſtem, that anſwers the greateſt, anſwers the leaſt. Thus regard has been had to man, and not to him alone, but to all other animals, according to their different natures and ends.

INFINITE wiſdom appears every where. Every new diſcovery, and how many and how marvellous have theſe been! is a new proof of this wiſdom, as well as of the power, of God. The power of executing is ſeen in every inſtance; and tho' we cannot diſcern the wiſdom of contrivance and direction, which are more remote from our obſervation, in every inſtance, yet we ſee them in ſo many, that it becomes the higheſt abſurdity not to acknowledge them in all. They, who do not acknowledge them ſo, judge of the proceedings of an all-perfect Being (for even the atheiſt diſputes, on this occaſion, for argument's ſake, on the ſuppoſition that there is one) as they would not judge

* De benef. L. vi.

of

Digitized by Google

of thoſe of a prince or miniſter of ſtate, who had acquired and deſerved, by a long courſe of political conduct, the reputation of wiſdom. Theſe they would not dare to pronounce unwiſe in any caſe, becauſe they ſaw the meaſures imperfectly, and becauſe the ends were unknown to them. Yet thus they judge with reſpect to God. "Why "does the rain pour down into the ſea, whilſt the "ſandy deſerts of Lybia are parched with drought? "Why do wintry ſtorms happen in the ſummer, "and irregular ſeaſons deſtroy our harveſts?" Such queſtions as theſe have been often aſked, and all of them relatively to man. They have been anſwered in many inſtances by new diſcoveries, after the deaths of thoſe who aſked them: and poſterity has been convinced, tho' they did not live to be ſo, that when they triumphed in them, they triumphed in their ignorance. DEMOCRITUS, EPICURUS, STRATO, ALPHONSUS of Caſtile, in ſhort all the makers and menders of worlds, ſhewed nothing but their ignorance and their preſumption. They attempted to riſe above God, and they are become the jeſt of mankind.

THOUGH I think that the moral attributes of the Supreme Being are abſorbed, as I expreſſed myſelf before, in his wiſdom; that we ſhould conſider them only as different modifications of this phyſical attribute, whatever ideas we may frame on the phaenomena; and that we muſt always talk precariouſly and impertinently when we preſume to apply our ideas of them to the appearances of

Digitized by Google

things; yet I think it proper to ſhew the divine and the atheiſt that even the goodneſs of God is not hard to defend againſt them both, by every one who denies, as every one may moſt reaſonably, the queſtion they beg, and grant, in conſequence of their alliance, to one another.

THE wiſdom is not ſo often diſcernible by us, as the power of God; nor the goodneſs, as the wiſdom. But a multitude of the phaenomena being conformable to our ideas of goodneſs, we may reaſon about it as we did juſt now about the divine wiſdom. If our adverſaries ſhew that men are expoſed to many phyſical and moral evils, we can ſhew much more good of both kinds that God has beſtowed on us, or put it into our power to procure to ourſelves. The evils we complain of are conſtant or occaſional effects of the conſtitution of a world that was not made for our ſakes. But the means to ſoften ſome, to prevent others, and to palliate and even to cure thoſe that cannot be prevented, are ſo many inſtances of the poſitive goodneſs of God, which ought to be brought to account, and ſet againſt the evils, with greater gratitude, and more fairly, than they are by men who paſs them ſlightly over, whilſt they deſcend into every particular of the other ſort, aggravate the leaſt, and declaim pathetically and partially on all.

IT would be eaſy to confirm and illuſtrate what is advanced, in the phyſical part, by numerous and unanſwerable

Digitized by Google

unanſwerable proofs, which are to be found in the writings of natural philoſophers. Theſe men have done more ſervice to true theiſm, than all the metaphiſical reaſoners a priori; or, to ſay ſomething ſtronger and equally true, they have done it more ſervice, than divines and atheiſts in confederacy have done it hurt. It is impoſſible to read, with attention and without prejudice, what the former have writ, and not to be convinced by fact, and by reaſon grounded on fact, not on hypotheſis, firſt, that we ought to conſider the world we inhabit no otherwiſe than as a little wheel in our ſolar ſyſtem; nor our ſolar ſyſtem any otherwiſe than as a little but larger wheel in the immenſe machine of the univerſe; and both the one and the other neceſſary perhaps to the motion of the whole and to the pre-ordained revolutions in it: nor, without being convinced, ſecondly, that the wiſdom, or, if you had rather ſay ſo, the goodneſs, of God has provided amply for the well-being of man in this world, and of the whole animal kind, who are objects of the divine care as well as he, according to their various deſtinations. In fine, and to take away every atheiſtical ſubterfuge; whether we ſay that the ſeveral ſpecies of animals were the final cauſes of thoſe things which ſeem particularly adapted to the uſe of each; or whether we ſay that the world was made ſuch as it is, without any regard to them; the proofs of divine wiſdom and goodneſs will be equally ſtrong: for if the world was made for the univerſe only, and without any regard to it's future inhabitants, this wiſdom and goodneſs

goodneſs were exerciſed as much in fitting theſe inhabitants to live commodiouſly in a world already made, as they could have been in making a world on purpoſe for them.

But we are not to think in this manner of the divine proceedings, nor to imagine that in them one plan ſucceeded another. Both were alike preſent to the mind of God. Our planet might have been, even uninhabited, very fit for all the mechanical purpoſes of it in the material ſyſtem. But there might be other purpoſes, which the creation of animals was neceſſary to anſwer: and ſince they were created, we ought to think that they were ſo for ſome purpoſe. It might be determined in the divine ideas, that there ſhould be a gradation of life and intellect throughout the univerſe. In this caſe, it was neceſſary that there ſhould be ſome creatures at our pitch of rationality, and others endued with all the degrees of life, ſenſe, and intellect, which we obſerve in the ſeveral ſpecies from the inſect up to man. This world might be allotted to ſuch kinds and orders of animated beings: and tho' it was made for the univerſe, not for them, ſome regard might be had to them, and to their well being in the conſtitution of it. They were not made to be miſerable. But even man was not made to be happier than it was conſiſtent with this part of the material ſyſtem, and with his own rank in the intellectual, that he ſhould be.

XLIV.

Digitized by Google

XLIV.

THE truth is, that when we contemplate the phaenomena, we cannot fail to diſcern, unleſs we live in a miſt of metaphyſics, how repugnant to them it is to affirm that the world was made for the ſake of man alone. Some modern divines have been candid enough to give up the point. Archbiſhop KING at leaſt, in his Eſſay on the original of evil, ſaw ſo plainly that even the natural and real attributes of God, even his wiſdom and his power, could not be otherwiſe defended againſt the cavils of atheiſm and of theology, that he ſcrupled not to declare the opinion to be abſurd, and what no one would object, who was not blinded with pride and ignorance. * But we diſcern at the ſame time in the contemplation of the phaenomena, that this world is accommodated in certain reſpects to the utility of the animals it contains, and that their natures are adapted in many more to the nature of the world. Thus the oblique poſition of the earth, by the inclination of it's axis to the plane of the ecliptic, makes a more equal diſtribution of the ſun's heat throughout the year, and in the different zones or climates, than there could be in any other poſition. Thus, again, men and all other ſpecies of animals are fitted for different climates and different elements, wherein they find the nouriſhment and the employment proper to their dif-

* Chap. iv. ſec. 2.

ferent

ferent natures. The animal kind may ſeem to be a final cauſe of the firſt. The conſtitution of the world is evidently the reaſon of the laſt. I deſcend into no more particulars. You will find an abundance of them collected by RAY, DERHAM, NIEUNTYT, and other writers, wherein the power and wiſdom of God in the whole creation are diſplayed: and ſuch proofs are brought that man and every ſpecies of the animal kind are fitted, in their very formation, for their ſtate here, as nothing but the moſt irrational obſtinacy can reſiſt. The minuteſt inſtances are deciſive: and thoſe which ſeem the moſt obvious, becauſe the moſt common, appear on a cloſer inſpection not leſs aſtoniſhing than the greateſt phaenomena, and the more remote from obſervation. The animal eye, for inſtance, is not leſs aſtoniſhing in it's various ſituations, motions, and particular uſes, than the eye of the world the ſun. To theſe writings let me refer you. Natural philoſophy, thus applied, leads irreſiſtibly to natural theology; and gives a juſt contempt for the figments and hypotheſes of artificial. Read, contemplate, adore, give thanks, and be reſigned.

METHINKS I hear a ſincere and devout theiſt, in the midſt of ſuch meditations as theſe, cry out, "No; the world was not made for man, "nor man only to be happy. The objections urg-"ed by atheiſts and divines againſt the wiſdom "and goodneſs of the Supreme Being, on theſe "arbitrary ſuppoſitions, deſtroy their own foun-"dations,

Digitized by Google

" dations. Mankind is expoſed, as well as
" other animals, to many inconveniencies and
" to various evils, by the conſtitution of the
" world. The world was not, therefore, made
" for him, nor he only to be happy. But he en-
" joys numberleſs benefits, by the fitneſs of his na-
" ture to this conſtitution, unaſked, unmerited,
" freely beſtowed. He returns, like other ani-
" mals, to the duſt; yet neither he nor they
" are willing to leave the ſtate wherein they are
" placed here. The wiſdom and the goodneſs of
" God are therefore manifeſt. I thank thee, O
" my Creator! that I am placed in a rank, low
" in the whole order of being, but the firſt in
" that animal ſyſtem to which I belong: a rank
" wherein I am made capable of knowing thee,
" and of diſcovering thy will, the perfection of
" my own nature, and the means of my own
" happineſs. Far be it from me to repine at my
" preſent ſtate, like thoſe who deny thee; or
" like thoſe who own thee, only to cenſure thy
" works, and the diſpenſations of thy providence.
" May I enjoy thankfully the benefits beſtow-
" on me by thy divine liberality. May I
" ſuffer the evils, to which I ſtand expoſed,
" patiently, nay willingly. None of thy creatures
" are made to be perfectly happy, like thy-
" ſelf; nor did thy goodneſs require that they
" ſhould be ſo. Such of them, as are more wor-
" thy objects of it than thy human creatures, ſu-
" perior natures that inhabit other worlds, may
" be affected in ſome degree or other by phyſical
" evils, ſince theſe are effects of the general laws

" of

Digitized by Google

" of matter and motion. They muſt be affected
" too in ſome degree or other by moral evil, ſince
" moral evil is the conſequence of error as well
" as of diſorderly appetites and paſſions, and
" ſince error is the conſequence of imperfect un-
" derſtanding. Leſs of this evil may prevail
" among them. But all that is finite, the moſt
" exalted intelligences, muſt be liable to ſome
" errors. Thou, O God! art alone that being
" who is liable to none, and to whom infallibility
" and impeccability belong.

" Duc me, parens celſique dominator poli,
" Quocumque placuit. Nulla parendi mora eſt.
" Aſſum impiger."*

SHALL we ſuppoſe now that an atheiſt and a divine break in upon the theiſt, and interrupt his pious meditations by inſiſting ſtill, like the echoes of EPICURUS, that if there is a God he muſt be infinitely good, as well as wiſe and powerful; and by aſking then, how it comes to paſs that there is any evil in the world? How it comes to paſs that the happineſs of man is not more complete, and better provided for, in it? Our theiſt would not be embarraſſed. His anſwer would be more ready than their reply. Their firſt abſurdity conſiſts in this, that they apply their notions of goodneſs to the divine nature: and the ſecond is this, that the argument they raiſe on theſe notions proves a great deal too much. Enough has been ſaid concerning the firſt; and if the theiſt reaſons on

* SEN. Ep. 107.

their

their notions of divine goodneſs it is merely ex abundantia. But he will expoſe the ſecond, by obſerving that if goodneſs ought to be, as they aſſume, the ſole directing principle in this caſe, and if wiſdom ought to contrive, and power to execute under this direction, the happineſs of man ought to be proportionable to the goodneſs of God, that is, infinite: than which no greater abſurdity can be conceived. But if we aſſume, in oppoſition to theſe confederates, that divine wiſdom, whereof we have ideas much better determined than we have of divine goodneſs, ought to be deemed in this, as in every other caſe, the directing principle of divine conduct; it will follow, without any abſurdity, nay moſt agreeably to the reaſon of things, that the effect may be proportionable to the cauſe, that is infinite. It implies contradiction to ſay, that God ſhould have made a creature infinitely happy, as happy as himſelf. But it implies none to ſay, that he made a ſyſtem of creation infinitely wiſe, and the beſt of all poſſible ſyſtems.

After this, our theiſt would be apt to make many juſt reproaches to the two confederates. He would reproach the atheiſt with his ſpirit of cavil and the unfairneſs of his proceedings. You pretend, would he ſay, that you cannot believe a God, becauſe you cannot reconcile many appearances, nor the ſtate of mankind in general, to your notions of goodneſs. But on your principles you would not acknowledge him, if the proofs

Digitized by Google

proofs of his goodneſs were as clear, as uniform, and as numerous, as thoſe of his wiſdom; for even to theſe you do not yield. Theſe, however, are conformable to the notions of wiſdom you muſt have, if you have any at all. You may cavil about the proofs of his goodneſs, and produce inſtances that ſeem repugnant to it, and that would be ſo if your hypotheſis was true. But the proofs of his wiſdom have nothing equivocal nor problematical in them, upon any hypotheſis. You can produce no inſtances that even ſeem to be repugnant to it. Whilſt natural philoſophy was ill cultivated, and ill underſtood, indeed men founded their objections to the wiſdom of God in their ignorance. But ſince the noble ſcience has been improved by experiment and geometry, ſince greater diſcoveries of the cauſes and effects of the phænomena in the œconomy of the world have been made, every new diſcovery has been a new proof of the wiſdom of God, and it has ſhined conſpicuous in the very inſtances brought againſt it.

It is a vain undertaking to go about to convince men of the goodneſs of God, who are obſtinate enough to reſiſt ſuch evident demonſtrations of his wiſdom, or not to ſee that an all-perfect Being muſt always be determined by the harmonious concurrence of all his perfections; and not in one inſtance by his goodneſs, in another by his juſtice, and ſo on. When we ſay, that he is infinitely wiſe, we mean that he does on every occaſion that

Digitized by Google

that which is fitteſt to be done; and it would imply contradiction to aſſert this, and to deny the other. But, however, the theiſt might go one ſtep further in reproaches to the atheiſt. With what face, might he ſay to him, can you object to the goodneſs of God, that men are expoſed to general evils, to tempeſts, to earthquakes, to famine, to peſtilence, as well as to particular evils, to pain, to ſickneſs, and to violent death? Is God not good, becauſe they are expoſed to evils that reſult neceſſarily from the conſtitution of a world, which, if we ſhould allow it to have been made for man, was made for the univerſe too; and to all of which evils they expoſe themſelves voluntarily for no other reaſon, than to indulge the ruling paſſion of their minds, and to ſate their ambition or their avarice, for inſtance, if theſe were to be ſated? God has given us means, as I ſaid above, to avoid, or to palliate, or to cure, theſe evils in many caſes. But men court them. The evils, that may be ſaid to come from God, are, for the moſt part, ſoon over. The greateſt of theſe calamities are ſeldom renewed; and few men have been, I ſuppoſe, expoſed to the plague twice, or involved twice in the ruins of an earthquake. But ambition, avarice, and other ruling paſſions, are never ſated: and the ſame perſons expoſe themſelves anew and continually to all the evils that accompany the purſuit of them. The theiſt might conclude this head very properly, by ſaying to the atheiſt: Theſe evils, which you found ſo highly and with ſo ill a grace, for the reaſons that have

been given, muſt be contingent effects of the conſtitution of the world, or they muſt be cauſed by particular directions. Take your choice. If you ſay the firſt, you ſay nothing that is inconſiſtent with the goodneſs of a Creator and Governor, whilſt you confirm my hypotheſis, that this world was made for the univerſe, not for man. If you ſay the laſt, you contradict yourſelf: you own that there is a God, and you acknowledge his providence.

The ſame theiſt might preſs his two adverſaries, the atheiſt and the divine both, in this manner ſtill further. If you ſay, that God has not created the beſt of all poſſible ſyſtems in creating the univerſe, you deny that infinite wiſdom which you, the divine, aſſert, and the proofs of which you, as well as I, have challenged the atheiſt to controvert. If you ſay, that he has, you muſt either ceaſe your complaints, or you muſt continue to complain on one of theſe two principles, that the Creator ought to have eſtabliſhed a ſyſtem that was not the beſt relatively to the whole of his deſign, that is to the univerſe, but the beſt relatively to man; or elſe that he ought to have created no ſuch being as man. Thus you are driven from abſurdity to abſurdity; for thus you do ſomething more abſurd, if poſſible, than a direct denial of the wiſdom of God would be. One of you admits, and the other cannot controvert this wiſdom: and then you both aſſert, that he ſhould not have acted conformably to it. His good-

Digitized by Google

goodneſs ſhould have controlled his wiſdom. He ſhould have changed the order of the univerſe, or he ſhould have broke the chain of intellectual beings. Such an aſſumed conduct may be conformable to your ideas of goodneſs. But the ideas of God, if we may aſcribe ideas to him, no more than his ways, are not thoſe of man: and, beſides, ſuch a conduct as this, even in human affairs, can anſwer no ideas, but thoſe of weakneſs, frailty, prepoſſeſſion, and partiality. Theſe, therefore, you would aſcribe to the all-perfect Being, ſuch is your impiety; one of you, that he may have a pretence to doubt of God's exiſtence; the other, that he may have a pretence to be dogmatical about the deſigns of God, and the future diſpenſations of his providence.

XLV.

IT may be ſaid that the theiſt argues hypothetically in defence of the divine attributes, like the atheiſt and divine who attack them. Now that he argues in ſome ſort hypothetically, I agree. But that he argues in any ſort like them, I deny. An hypotheſis, which the phaenomena contradict, or which is inconſiſtent even with one of them, is not admiſſible. An hypotheſis, which they all concur to eſtabliſh, is ſcarce an hypotheſis. The goodneſs of God required that this world ſhould be made for the ſake of man, and he only to be happy, is an hypotheſis of the firſt kind. That the goodneſs of God did not require

Digitized by Google

this, and that his wiſdom required ſomething elſe, ſince it appears in his works that ſomething elſe has been done, and ſince his works, which muſt be always conformable to his attributes, can alone enable us to judge concerning theſe; this, I ſay, is ſcarce an hypotheſis. It is founded in fact, and is agreeable to our cleareſt and moſt diſtinct ideas. The atheiſt and the divine argue, from what they do not know, againſt what they do know: and in order to make the impoſition paſs, they trifle groſly between two methods of reaſoning. One proves a poſteriori that there is a firſt intelligent cauſe of all things. The other ſuppoſes it. After this, they attempt to prove a priori that there is a neceſſary connection between the wiſdom and power of this being, and his goodneſs and juſtice, which are, they ſay, in him, the very ſame that they are in our ideas. After this, they return again to the former method, and attempt to prove a poſteriori, that he is neither good nor juſt. The theiſt employs no ſuch artifice. He reaſons uniformly, from the works of God, to his exiſtence and his attributes: and, reaſoning in this manner, he raiſes no objection to either, and is able to defend both.

I HAVE ſpoke often of the pride of man, as the cauſe of many errors in philoſophy, and eſpecially in the firſt philoſophy. It has no doubt a ſhare in determining the atheiſt to the opinions that have been mentioned. But the atheiſt has another motive. His great aim is to free his mind

Digitized by Google

mind from the belief that there is any Supreme Being. He ſtruggles hard againſt demonſtration, and catches at every hypotheſis that may give him a pretence to doubt. Such a pretence he finds in that which aſſumes notions of the moral attributes of God, and of his deſigns in favor of man; and then oppoſes the phaenomena to theſe notions. He has, on this occaſion, the very ſingular advantage we have obſerved, that many of his adverſaries agree with him in the premiſes, help him to eſtabliſh them, and defend the cauſe of theiſm very ill againſt his concluſions afterwards. Divines, who do in effect no leſs than betray this cauſe to him, have likewiſe their private motive. They are unwilling to lower, on any account, their notions of human worth and importance, or of the deſigns of God in favor of man; and for that reaſon, ſince theſe notions cannot be maintained on the appearances of things that are, they have endeavoured, in all ages, and in all religions, to maintain them on the ſuppoſition of things that may be: and the whole force of human imagination has been employed to ſooth human pride. Much of what the pagans advanced hypothetically to keep up theſe notions, in oppoſition to univerſal experience, is indeed no longer hypothetical; ſince it has been admitted into chriſtianity. It is not hypothetical, I mean, when it is conſidered as a matter of revelation; for it is as hypothetical as ever, when it is conſidered as an object of reaſon. Let us leave it then reſpectfully to revelation, which is ſufficient, or nothing

Digitized by Google

can be ſo, to ſupport it. Let us not employ our reaſon about things which ſhe muſt either diſown, or proſtitute herſelf to maintain. Let us not employ her to multiply, or to improve hypotheſes. Let us employ her in a manner to want none: and that we ſhall do effectually, if we keep her within thoſe bounds, which God has preſcribed by revealing in his works ſo much, and no more, of natural theology, and of natural religion, as he thought it neceſſary for us to know.

These precautions are the more fit to be taken, becauſe tho' our religion forbids pride, and teaches humility, yet the whole ſyſtem of it tends to inſpire the former into all thoſe who are not able to diſcern the conſiſtency of particular precepts and of the ſyſtem; which I preſume that very few are. According to this ſyſtem, man was not only made in the image of God, but the world and he were ſo made that his happineſs ſeemed to be the final cauſe of the whole. He felt, indeed, from this ſtate; but God, who ſuffered him to fall rather than to reſtrain him in the exercise of his free will, determined inſtantly to raiſe him again, by the ſacrifice of his own Son: whilſt he abandoned myriads of fallen angels to the fatal conſequences of their revolt, without any hopes of redemption. Is it poſſible to conceive higher notions of a created being, than theſe revealed truths muſt inſpire? Plato aſſerted, on his exalted notions of the Supreme Being, that immortality was communicated by a ſort of phyſical neceſſity

neceſſity to every creature that this Being himſelf created. Chriſtian philoſophers might be led more eaſily from the exalted notions of human nature, which theſe revealed truths inſpire, to imagine that happineſs was to be communicated by a ſort of moral neceſſity to ſuch a creature as man. Allow me one inſtance more. The Iſraelites were one of the leaſt, and leaſt worthy, nations upon earth. Yet God choſe them, according to the ſame ſyſtem, by a wonderful predilection, for his favourite people, preferred them to all the people of the earth, and aſſigned them a country flowing with milk and honey. May not chriſtian philoſophers have been led, by this example, to believe that God preferred mankind to all other intellectual creatures, and made a particular world for them, as he aſſigned a particular country to the Iſraelites? The facts, tho' received in theology, are not, indeed, applicable to philoſophy. But when the mind is once tinctured by them, and an habit contracted of reaſoning from them, any thing, that appears analogous to them, will be the more eaſily admitted.

XLVI.

THE confederacy between atheiſts and divines appears to have been carried very far, by what has been ſaid already. I have choſe, in the reflections that have been made to account for the phyſical and moral evil that is in the world, and to defend the attributes of God, to go up

Digitized by Google

to the ſource of all the falſe reaſoning about them, rather than to inſiſt on the topics that are commonly employed: and I hope that the method I have taken is not the worſe for being ſhorter, plainer, and leſs metaphyſical. I muſt confeſs that I do not ſee, how the cauſe of God can be effectually pleaded on this head any other way. But there is another head, on which it muſt be pleaded likewiſe: for the antitheiſtical confederacy does not end here. Leſt the bare exiſtence of evil ſhould not afford the atheiſt color enough to deny the being of God, nor the divine a ſufficient foundation whereon to erect, by the ſeeming authority of reaſon, that ſyſtem of another world, which is, and always has been, of great advantage to him in this, they proceed to conſider theſe evils in the diſtribution of them. The ſuppoſed injuſtice of this diſtribution has been ever in their mouths a ſubject of accuſation, not to ſay of invective, againſt the providence of God: and they have been heard with partiality of two kinds, that of love, and that of averſion, in their favor. The good that happens to themſelves, and to thoſe with whom they are intimately connected by ſentiment, by intereſt, and often by both, is an object of one partiality among men. The evil, that happens to theſe, is an object of the other. The order is reverſed, when perſons we diſapprove, or who ſtand in oppoſition to our ſentiments or intereſts, are concerned. We hate the good, and we love the evil, that happens to them. Great advantage has been taken of theſe na-

natural diſpoſitions to attack ſucceſsfully the divine providence in human opinion. But here, indeed, the alliance between the atheiſt and the divine breaks off. The former concludes directly, that there is no God. The latter, after all he has done to favour this opinion indirectly, maintains ſtill that there is one. How well the premiſes common to both, and their oppoſite concluſions, are founded, let us examine. I fear, that the atheiſt will appear to that reaſon, to which they both appeal, more conſiſtent in his abſurdity, than the divine.

I THINK I have ſaid, that artificial theology betrays the cauſe of God, how ſincerely and how piouſly ſoever ſome of the profeſſors of it may direct their intentions: and, if I have ſaid ſo, I ſhall not recal my words. If theſe men had left the atheiſts to aſſert alone, both vainly and foolishly, that divine goodneſs required the world ſhould be made for the ſake of man, and that God could have no other motive to create him, except that of communicating happineſs to him, they might have defended this goodneſs ſufficiently, as I hope it has been ſhewn; and the divine juſtice too, as, I hope, it will be ſhewn. They would have had no after game to play, nor any contradictions to reconcile. The Stoics would not have been obliged to deny that to be evil, which they and every one elſe felt to be evil: nor the chriſtians to reſt their defence on this propoſition, that the firſt deſigns of God were diſappointed

appointed by the fall of man; which cannot be conceived by reaſon, and which the atheiſt will not admit on the authority of revelation, or rather of a moral, philoſophical, egyptian allegory. But when they reaſoned on the ſame principles, as the atheiſt reaſoned, down to his concluſion excluſively, they left themſelves no pretence for not concurring in the ſame concluſion, but that of an hypotheſis, and of an hypotheſis which cannot, if it is admitted, effectually diſcharge the goodneſs, nor juſtice of God, at the tribunal of reaſon. Thus it ſeems plain to me, that they betray the cauſe of God; for they undermine it; and if the hypotheſis fails, that truth, which was raiſed on demonſtration, fails with it, or totters on ſo precarious a ſupport.

To ſuch a riſque at leaſt does artificial theology, as it is employed in this caſe, expoſe the firſt principle of all religion: and we may apply to the ſchools, that teach it, what ARISTO of Chios ſaid of ſome ſchools of philoſophy. As caution was to be uſed leſt men ſhould go debauched out of the ſchool of ARISTIPPUS, or moroſe out of that of ZENO, ſo caution ſhould be uſed leſt men go infidels out of the ſchools of chriſtianity. A few reflections will ſhew that the riſque I mention is not imaginary, but very real. No doctrines were ever inculcated more ſtrongly on the minds of men, nor enforced by more authority, than thoſe of a future ſtate. The inſtitutors of religions, and the prieſts of theſe religions, were care-

Digitized by Google

careful to eſtabliſh and to maintain them in belief. They excited devotion, multiplied obſervances, and increaſed offerings. By them, the religious ſociety has governed principally in all ages: and if the prieſts of Egypt undertook to conduct men in the way of the gods, in the difficult road, in the ineffable paths, and through the brazen gates that lead to the manſions of the bleſſed;* we may quote prieſts in the pale of chriſtianity, at this time, who undertake to ſave men from hell, to deliver them from purgatory, and to conduct them to heaven through the gates whereof St. PETER has the keys; as well as others who make ſome of the ſame pretenſions, and who ſcruple not to declare, that, if this doctrine be taken away, all difference between good and bad is taken away, and there is no ſuch thing as religion left. To this authority we muſt add that of legiſlators and magiſtrates, who have, for political purpoſes, authoriſed the ſame doctrines, ſolemniſed them by religious inſtitutions, like thoſe of the eleuſinian myſteries, confirmed them by laws, and ſet education, the great nurſe of theological opinions, on their ſide. Theſe are great advantages: and yet we do not find that this doctrine ever had an effect ſuitable to them, or to the importance of it. Remote conſiderations, tho' they are believed, have not indeed the ſame influence that immediate objects have. But they have an influence proportionable to the belief of them: and they muſt have this influence, eſpecially in a caſe like this, where the

* EUSEB. Praep. evan. Lib. ix. cap. 10.

puniſh-

puniſhments held out are unavoidable, and no man can hope, as every man does in all other caſes, to eſcape them.

I DO not ſay, that to believe a future ſtate is to believe a vulgar error; but this I ſay, it cannot be demonſtrated by reaſon: it is not in the nature of it capable of demonſtration, and no one ever returned that irremeable way, to give us an aſſurance of the fact. It was, therefore, originally an hypotheſis; and it may, therefore, be a vulgar error. It was taken upon truſt by the people who firſt adopted it, and made prevalent by art and induſtry among the vulgar who never examine, till it came to be doubted, diſputed, and denied by ſuch as did examine. It was made, like many other opinions that had no better foundations, ſubſervient to philoſophical ſyſtems, and political inſtitutions. It was advanced in anſwer to the great atheiſtical argument, drawn from the proſperity of wicked men. It was applied to enforce human laws, by divine and temporary rewards and puniſhments, by the fear of others more grievous, and more laſting, to procure greater authority to governors and more ſubmiſſion from the governed. It was communicated from Egypt, the mother of good policy as well as of ſuperſtition, to Greece. The luxuriant imaginations of that people improved it, and the mythologia de inferis became a favourite theme of their poets, of ORPHEUS, of HOMER, and ſo downwards even to their dramatic writers. There ſeems likewiſe to have been a

cuſtom

Digitized by Google

cuſtom then, not very unlike to that which prevailed about two centuries ago in the chriſtian church generally, and much later, I believe, in Spain, the cuſtom I mean of acting myſteries. Such theſe repreſentations were called by the heathens, and the ſame kind of religious fopperies retained the ſame name among chriſtians.

But that which gave the greateſt credit to this doctrine, and ſpread it moſt, was the authority of Homer and Plato. The former was gravely quoted by philoſophers, as a philoſopher, an hiſtorian, and a divine; and all as properly, no doubt, as the latter. The Romans took this doctrine and theſe myſteries from the Greeks: and the Greeks carried them back, when they conquered Aſia and Egypt, to the countries from whence they had received them. Homer and Plato were in the zenith of their glory at the time of Alexander's expedition, and they continued to be ſo in the reigns of his ſucceſſors. Whether the Jews, who began about, or a little before, this time to have ſchools, and to engraft from foreign ſtocks on their own law, might not have taken the firſt hints of a future ſtate from ſome of their neighbours, I know not. But it is moſt probable that this doctrine was not known, or at leaſt not taught, amongſt them, till the diſputes in their ſchools gave a riſe to the ſects of Sadducees and Phariſees in their church. The moſt conſiderable perſons, the richeſt, ſays Joſephus, adhered to the Sadducees, who adhered ſo ſtrictly to the law of Moſes, that they could

not

not admit a doctrine whereof there appeared no traces in it; and therefore denied the reſurrection. The Phariſees or the ſeparatiſts, on the other hand, were ready to admit things marvellous in doctrine, and ſuperſtitious in practice; to reconcile them, if they could, to the written, or to juſtify them by an oral, law: for no expedient ſerves the purpoſe of innovators better than that of a blind tradition. All this was proper to ſtrike the multitude: and the multitude followed the Phariſees. Thus the doctrine of a future ſtate, and even of a tranſmigration of ſouls, ſlided into the ſyſtem of judaiſm before the coming of CHRIST: and yet they who adopted this doctrine then had no better authority for it, than that of egyptian prieſts, greek poets, and pythagorean and platonic hypotheſes.

THUS it is that the immortality of the ſoul, and future rewards and puniſhments, ſome parts of what philoſophers and poets had imagined, were ſanctified by revelation ſoon afterwards. Thus ſanctified, they deſerve our reſpect, and challenge the implicit belief of every chriſtian. Thus, and thus alone, they are maintained in opinion; and not by the futile reaſonings of divines with which we have to do here. Theſe are called demonſtrations by the men who make them, and who triumph in them as if they were ſufficient of themſelves and muſt convince by their own evidence. But the truth is, they would have little effect on the minds of men, if they did not paſs for ſuper-

abun-

Digitized by Google

abundant proofs of what is made certain by revelation, and if the reſpect that men pay to revelation did not ſcreen theſe reaſoners from being attacked ſo directly, and in ſo many ways, as they would be otherwiſe, and as they deſerve to be, for preſuming to reſt all religion both natural and revealed on their metaphyſical refinements, and their abſtract reaſonings a priori.

THE moſt zealous aſſerters of a Supreme Being, the warmeſt defenders of his providence, and they who were the moſt perſuaded of the neceſſity of a religion to preſerve morality, and the good order of civil government, were far from this preſumption. Some of them rather hoped, than believed, the immortality of the ſoul: and if they admitted a future ſtate, they laughed at the old women's tales, the aniles fabulae, of an hell and the furies. They either rejected the doctrine, or they admitted it by halves. It was not only problematical in the opinions of theiſtical philoſophers, but it ſeems, in ſeveral inſtances, to have had little hold on vulgar opinion; notwithſtanding the means that had been uſed to inculcate it. One inſtance, and a remarkable one it is, ſhall be given. TULLY,* in a public pleading, wherein we may aſſure ourſelves that he was careful to let nothing fall, that might be an occaſion of ſcandal by contradicting and ridiculing the religious eſtabliſhed opinions, ſpeaking of OPPIANICUS, who had been condemned only to baniſhment, and, after ſaying that he

* Orat. pro. A. CLUEN.

ſhould

ſhould have killed himſelf, adds—" nam nunc " quidem (OPPIANICUS was then dead in his exile) " quid tandem illi mali mors attulit? Niſi " forte ineptiis ac fabulis ducimur ut exiſtimemus " illum apud inferos impiorum ſupplicia perferre " .... actum eſſe praecipitem in ſceleratorum ſe- " dem atque regionem. Quae ſi falſa ſint, id " quod omnes intelligunt, quid ei tandem mors " eripuit praeter ſenſum doloris?"

THE uſe I make of this deduction is to ſhew that, the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments having been precariouſly eſtabliſhed, and neither generally nor entirely believed by thoſe who believed the exiſtence of God on better foundations, there is a real danger to this firſt principle of all religion, ariſing from the hypotheſis againſt which I contend. Reaſon, experience, and ſelf-conſciouſneſs, prove to me that a man may be thoroughly convinced that there is a ſupreme and ſelf-exiſtent Being of infinite power and wiſdom, without ſubſcribing to ſuch notions of his moral attributes as divines would impoſe, or believing them any more capable, than himſelf, of determining what theſe attributes required that God ſhould do. But I can eaſily conceive, at the ſame time, that by eloquent diſcourſes on the dignity of human nature, and the miſery of human kind, by the cajolement of appeals to his paſſions and to his ſenſes, this man may be induced to think that the miſery of mankind overbalances their happineſs in general,

Digitized by Google

general,* and that in particular the criminal have many times the lot of the innocent, and the innocent that of the criminal: from whence he may conclude, that God is an unjuſt and cruel Being, and deals unreaſonably with his creatures, unleſs he has given them immortal ſouls, and there be another world wherein he makes proper amends to the good, at leaſt for what they have ſuffered in this. The man is brought to the very brink of the precipice. He cannot believe a God unjuſt, cruel, unreaſonable: but he may find it as difficult to believe a God who acts againſt his attributes, and the perfections of his nature, in one ſyſtem, only to have a reaſon the more for acting agreeably to them in another. In a word, he may be led by theology, if he does not ſtart back and revert to his former ways of thinking, from theiſm into atheiſm. DES CARTES and his followers have been juſtly cenſured for reſting the truth of God's exiſtence on their favorite proof, drawn from the idea which they aſſume that the mind can frame of an all-perfect Being, and neglecting or even rejecting every other. Divines are juſtly liable to the ſame cenſure: for tho' they admit all the proofs that eſtabliſh this great truth, yet they reſt the validity of them ultimately on the hypotheſis here mentioned, and expoſe ſuch, as cannot take this hypotheſis for a demonſtration, to the danger of miſtaking the demonſtrations for hypotheſes.

* Relig. of nat. delineated, pag. 205. et. ſeq.

Digitized by Google

XLVII.

THIS danger, great as it is, appears to ſuch a divine as CLARKE, or is repreſented by him, to be none at all. He, who does not believe the moral attributes of the Supreme Being to be juſt ſuch, as the doctor conceives them, and as eſſential to the divine nature as the natural attributes, has the doctor's conſent to believe no God at all. This is the angular ſtone of artificial theology. Grant to the divine that theſe attributes and the eternal reaſon of things are ſuch as he conceives them to be, and he will raiſe whatever ſchemes he pleaſes of divine economy. He will ſhew you what God was, and is, obliged to do as creator and governor of the world, * and what he muſt do to correct his firſt plan, to ſet the diſorders and inequalities of it right, and to make the whole deſign appear at it's conſummation, what it does not appear at preſent, a deſign worthy of infinite wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs. Refuſe to grant what he aſſumes, and proves nothing with all his pomp of argument, and airs of demonſtration. This profane application and impudent abuſe of reaſon is grown ſo common, that they who are guilty of it do not perceive it to be what it is; and that every little ſmatterer in artificial theology, who clambers up into a pulpit, talks of the nature, attributes, and providence of the ſupreme, ineffa-

* Demonſtration, p. 131.

ble,

Digitized by Google

ble, incomprehenſible Being with ſuch aſſurance, as would be unpardonable preſumption in angels and archangels themſelves.

How ſhould it be leſs? How ſhould finite meaſure infinite? God's manner of knowing is ours no more, than his manner of being. At leaſt, I think, that one of theſe propoſitions may be reduced, as well as the other, to abſurdity. But if his manner of knowing could be ſuppoſed, without abſurdity, the ſame, would it not be ſtill abſurd to ſuppoſe the objects of omniſcience as confined, as the objects of human ſcience? And yet they muſt be ſo; if the eternal reaſon of things, by which the divine wiſdom conducts them all, be juſt the ſame as it appears to be to the underſtanding of every rational being, and if God appeals to man himſelf for his conduct towards man. When God communicates any knowledge to any of his creatures, it is ſuch as he thinks neceſſary for them; and it is, therefore, communicated in a manner proportionable to their conceptions. Thus he has communicated to mankind in his works ſome knowledge of himſelf, more of the world they inhabit, and ſtill more of their ſtate, their duty, and their intereſt in it. What he has not given them the means of knowing according to their manner of knowing, they are ignorant of: and, therefore, tho' the particular reaſons and final cauſes of ſome few things relatively to themſelves, and to their ſyſtem, are known to them, yet even theſe are in many more inſtances unknown; and the reaſons,

Digitized by Google

relatively to God, for conſtituting theſe and all other things as they are conſtituted, can be known to God alone, who ſees them intuitively in himſelf, who is himſelf the eternal reaſon. They cannot be objects of human underſtanding; for they are not conceivable by human ideas: and it is impoſſible to hear men with patience, when they endeavour to palm upon us, moſt impertinently, their notions of glory and honour for inſtance, and to make them paſs for the motives that determine God.

We receive ideas from ſenſation and reflection, and we frame others by the ſeveral operations of our minds about theſe. Our minds have no other objects when they exerciſe the power of thinking, whatever that be. Theſe ideas do not go far into the extent of being; nor our power of thinking, by conſequence: and even in this extent our moſt ſimple ideas are ſometimes fallacious, our moſt complex always unſteady, and many of them imperfect and inadequate, confuſed and obſcure. There is ſomewhat more. Our knowledge does not extend even to all our ideas. Let me borrow two examples from Mr. Locke. "We have the "ideas of a ſquare, a circle, and equality; and "yet ſhall never be able, perhaps, to find a circle "equal to a ſquare, and to know certainly that it "is ſo. We have the ideas of matter and thinking; but poſſibly ſhall never be able to know "whether any mere material being thinks or no." In like manner, and far more ſtrongly, it may be ſaid,

Digitized by Google

ſaid, that, ſuppoſing us to have ideas of divine wiſdom, goodneſs, and juſtice, there will be various phaenomena ſtill, whereof we may have very clear and diſtinct ideas, and wherein we ſhall be never able to diſcover how wiſdom co-incides with goodneſs or juſtice, nor be able to make the application of the phaenomena to the attributes. Thus the caſe would ſtand, ſuppoſing our ideas of theſe attributes in God as adequate as our ideas of a ſquare, a circle, equality, matter, and thought. But it grows much ſtronger when we conſider how inadequate our ideas of theſe attributes muſt neceſſarily be, not only on account of the infinite diſtance between the divine and human nature, but on account of the numberleſs and to us unknown relations, reſpectively to all which the divine providence acts: which, if we did know them, we ſhould be unable to compare, and in which, therefore, the harmony of divine perfections would not be diſcernible by us. Upon the whole matter, we may conclude, ſafely from error, and in direct oppoſition to CLARKE, that goodneſs and juſtice in God cannot be conceived, without manifeſt preſumption and impiety, to be "the ſame as in the "ideas we frame of theſe perfections when we conſider them in men, or when we reaſon about "them abſtractly in themſelves; but that in the "ſupreme Governor of the world they are ſomething tranſcendent, and of which we cannot "make any true judgment, nor argue with any "certainty about them."

Digitized by Google

THUS I think: and, if I wanted any authority to juſtify me, I could find it in Dr. BARROW, and in St. PAUL, whom I quote rather as a theologian, than an inſpired apoſtle, ſince we conſider this whole matter on principles of reaſon, and not of revelation. The former begins his ſermon, on a text taken from the epiſtle of the latter to the Romans,* "How unſearchable are his judgments, "and his ways paſt finding out?" by obſerving that when God rejected the greateſt part of his antient people, for their refuſal to embrace the goſpel, and took the gentiles into his favor, the advocates of judaiſm argued againſt this proceeding from their ideas of wiſdom, as well as of juſtice, and the other moral attributes. "This proceeding, they ſaid, argued his former affection to "them to have been miſplaced. It impleaded his "antient covenant, and law, of imperfection. It "ſupplanted his own deſigns. It unravelled all "that he had been doing for many ages." St. PAUL anſwered the advocates of judaiſm by other arguments, taken from "ideas of general equity, "of the nature of God, of his attributes, of his "relations to men, &c. But after he had ſteered "his diſcourſe through all theſe rocks," which, I "preſume, would have been ſuch for CLARKE, if they were ſuch for St. PAUL, "he thought it ſafe "to caſt anchor, that is, to wind up the conteſt, "in this modeſt intimation, that whatever he "could ſay might not perhaps exhauſt the diffi-

* C. ix. 33.

"culty,

"culty, nor void all ſcruple; and that, there-
"fore, in this, and in all ſuch caſes, for entire
"ſatisfaction we ſhould have recourſe to the in-
"comprehenſible wiſdom of God, who frequently,
"in the courſe of his providence, ordereth things
"in methods tranſcending our ability to diſcover
"or trace." St. PAUL did not pretend that his manner of accounting, for rejecting the Jews and calling in the gentiles, was an infallible demonſtration, certain and neceſſary, even as certain as the attributes of God. Much leſs did he affirm that if his arguments, concerning the diſpenſations of providence, were not a demonſtration, there was no demonſtration of the being of God: and yet, ſurely, beſides the difference between the apoſtle of the gentiles, and the miniſter of St. James's, it could not be harder to prove that the rejection of the Jews, and the vocation of the gentiles were conſiſtent with the goodneſs and juſtice of God, than to prove that a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments is neceſſary to juſtify his attributes, and to render his diſpenſations in this world conſiſtent with them.

DR. BARROW proceeds to conſider ſeveral reaſons, why we cannot clearly diſcern the entire congruity of providential diſpenſations to the divine attributes, as he expreſſes himſelf in another place. He could not cut the knot at once, nor bring the ſame charge, as we have done, directly againſt the preſumption of men of his own order. He was a divine, he was a preacher, he was to keep up the

Digitized by Google

cant of the pulpit. He gives, therefore, ſome reaſons of a prudential kind, which may have determined God to veil his face with a cloud, and to wrap up his power in ſome obſcurity: ſuch for inſtance as theſe, that he may not confound our weak ſight, that he may exalt our faith, that he may appear God indeed, or that we may be well aſſured concerning a future account, and forced in our thoughts to recur thither for a reſolution of all emergent doubts and difficulties. Such flimſy ſtuff is a man like this obliged to vend, when he has put on a black gown and a band. But he lays his ſtreſs on another kind of reaſoning, and ſuch as is truly deciſive. "As the dealings of very "wiſe," he ſays, and we may add, of very juſt and good, men, "are ſometimes founded upon "maxims, and admit juſtifications, not obvious "nor penetrable by vulgar conceit, ſo may God act "according to rules of wiſdom and juſtice which "it may be quite impoſſible by our faculties to ap-"prehend, or with our means to deſcry. As there "are natural modes of being and operation ... ſo "there may be prudential and moral rules of pro-"ceeding, far above our reach .... peculiar ob-"jects of divine wiſdom, and not to be underſtood "by any creature .... eſpecially by creatures who "ſtand in the loweſt form of intelligence, one re-"move from beaſts .... In fine, thoſe rules of "equity and experience which we in our tranſac-"tions with one another do uſe .... if they be ap-"plied to the dealings of God, will be found very "incongruous or deficient, the caſe being vaſtly al-

tered

Digitized by Google

"tered from that infinite diſtance in nature and "ſtate between God and us, and from the im-"menſe differences which his relations towards us "have from our relations to one another." Theſe two great divines are, you ſee, on my ſide. They are both of the ſame opinion that CLARKE cenſures: and, if his cenſures were as juſt as they are dogmatical, St. PAUL himſelf would be one of thoſe men who take, in reality, the moral attributes of God entirely away, and who may on the ſame grounds deny his natural attributes *.

XLVIII.

IT is time to have done with CLARKE, eſpecially ſince I leave this part of the argument in much better hands than my own, in thoſe of Dr. BARROW and St. PAUL, who deny to him the very principle from which, as from a common ſource, all the accuſations of providence are deduced by him, by many other divines, and by the whole tribe of atheiſts. I proceed to take notice of another writer, and to examine another of thoſe aſſumptions which are employed by theſe men, whether divines or theiſts, to maintain their charge. That we are very incompetent judges of the moral attributes of God and of the eternal reaſon of things; that it is unpardonable preſumption in us to pronounce what both or either of them required that God ſhould do in the original conſtitution of our ſyſtem, or requires that he ſhould do in the government of it; theſe truths, I ſay, are ſo evident,

* Evidences, p. 26.

that

that he, who denies them, does not deſerve to be argued againſt any longer. "Quae perſpicua "ſunt longa eſſe nont debent." The determination of them ſhould in reaſon determine the whole diſpute. Infinite wiſdom and infinite power have made things as they are: how goodneſs and juſtice required that they ſhould be made, is neither coram judice, nor to any rational purpoſe to enquire. For greater ſatisfaction, however, it may not be amiſs to ſhew that neither the ſtate of mankind in this life, in general, nor the lot of good and bad men, in particular, are ſuch as they have been repreſented to ſerve the purpoſes of ſome perſons; and that, if they were ſuch, the hypotheſis of a life to come would not reſtore by reaſon the goodneſs and juſtice, which theſe men endeavour to deſtroy by appeals to reaſon and to paſſion.

THE ſolemn author of the Religion of nature delineated, whom CLARKE had in his eye perhaps, when he deſcribed his fourth ſort of theiſts, whether this treatiſe had been then publiſhed or not, places himſelf on the ſame bench with MINOS. MINOS was the ſon of JUPITER, and the diſciple of his father. So PLATO calls him, in order to inſinuate, as I believe, that nothing leſs than the wiſdom of the Supreme Being was ſufficient for the taſk aſſigned to this infernal judge. But I think, on recollection, that I muſt recall my words, and ſay that WOLLASTON places himſelf far above MINOS. He judges God as well as man. Departed ſouls appear at the tribunal of the other, where

Digitized by Google

where they are puniſhed for the evil they have done, or recompenſed for the evil they have ſuffered, in this world. But he erects this court of judicature, eſtabliſhes the general laws of it, as he judges the perfections of the divine nature required that they ſhould be eſtabliſhed; and diſtinguiſhes, and weighs the kinds of happineſs, or miſery, that fall to the ſhare of different men; clear, and mixed happineſs, avoidable, and unavoidable miſery in the whole, or avoidable ſo far that the creature would chuſe rather to bear the remainder than miſs the proportion of happineſs: all which muſt come into conſideration with the good and the evil men have done, at that judgment ſeat, where they are to be tried after death for what they have done in life.

In his attempt to prove, from the nature of an all-perfect Being, that God created the human ſoul immortal, becauſe the mortality of it does not conſiſt with reaſon, this author has the temerity to aſſert that he, who ſays the contrary, muſt ſay in conſequence either that God is unreaſonable, unjuſt, and cruel, or that no man has a greater ſhare of miſery unavoidable than of happineſs *. Nay further, the exiſtence of an all-perfect Being depends ſo much, according to this theiſt, on the hypotheſis of a future ſtate †, that one ſingle inſtance of unfortunate virtue and of proſperous wickedneſs in this world would be to him a ſufficient argument for ſuch a ſtate. His reaſon is,

* P. 209. † P. 205.

that

that God cannot be unjuſt nor unreaſonable in any one inſtance; which is undoubtedly true. But on this ſuppoſition he would be ſo in one inſtance, if there was no future ſtate. One inſtance of theſe kinds, therefore, would have been to WOLLASTON a demonſtration againſt the exiſtence of an all-perfect Being, without the hypotheſis of ſuch a ſtate. This is ſtrange theiſm. Artificial theology is neither more dogmatical, nor more abſurd: and the belief of God's exiſtence hangs by a twine in both.

To ſupport this hypotheſis, he gives a moſt exaggerated deſcription of the misfortunes to which particular men are liable in this world, and a very ridiculous as well as exaggerated deſcription of the general, and uſual ſtate of mankind; both which are aſſumed to be inconſiſtent with the idea of a reaſonable cauſe. Let us conſider the laſt firſt, as the natural order ſeems to require. Whilſt the CLARKES and WOLLASTONS of the age accuſe the providence of God by arguments drawn from his nature, and from the eternal reaſon of things, both as imperfectly known to them as to you and me; let us defend this providence by arguments, drawn from the nature of man, and the actual conſtitution of the world, both equally well known to them and to us. Inſtead of hearkening to them, let us hearken to God who ſpeaks to us in his works; and inſtead of pronouncing what it was right for him to do, believe all he has done, for that very reaſon, right. Let us be prepared

to

Digitized by Google

to meet with ſeveral appearances, which we cannot explain, nor therefore reconcile to the ideas we endeavour to form of the divine perfections. But let us remember too that as the pretended ſcience of the men, againſt whom we diſpute, expoſes them to error, and as they render the great truths of theiſm doubtful, or at leaſt perplexed, by blending them up in an imaginary ſcheme of divine economy; ſo we may be ſecure from error by a modeſt avowal of ignorance, where human knowledge ceaſes: and as the imperfections of created Beings prove them to be created, not ſelf-exiſtent, ſo the very deficiencies of the knowledge we have will be ſo many proofs of it's truth. They muſt be neceſſarily ſuch; for if it be true that infinite wiſdom and infinite power created and govern the univerſe, it cannot but follow that ſome of the phaenomena may be proportionable, and that others muſt be diſproportionable, to our, and to every other, finite underſtanding.

XLIX.

HAVING premiſed what I thought proper in this place, I obſerve that the repreſentation, made of the general ſtate of mankind, proves nothing, or proves too much. It proves nothing if a gradation of animal beings appeared neceſſary or fit in the divines ideas, that is, to ſpeak leſs platonically and more rationally, to the ſupreme or divine reaſon and intention; for in that caſe

Digitized by Google

caſe why ſhould not we be the creatures we are? It proves, or attempts to prove, too much, if it be intended to prove that there is, or that there ſhould have been, no ſuch chain of Being: for as we ſee that there is one almoſt from nonentity up to man, and have the moſt probable reaſons to perſuade us that it continues up to natures infinitely below the divine, but vaſtly ſuperior to the human; ſo there is ſurely no metaphyſical nor theological preſumption mad enough to aſſert that we are capable of knowing what the conſtitution, order, and harmony of an univerſe require.

But now, whether ſuch a gradation of being goes through the whole univerſe, or whether it be confined to our planet and ſtops at man, as the ignorance and pride of antient philoſophers induced them to believe; why is not the general ſtate of mankind conſiſtent with the idea of a reaſonable cauſe? This reaſonable cauſe may have produced ſuch creatures as we are either relatively to that chain, whereof we make a neceſſary link, or independently of it, and on other motives at which it is impoſſible we ſhould even gueſs. When objections are made to ſuch things as appear inconſiſtent with the perfections of an all-perfect Being in the Bible, the divine's anſwer is that of St. Paul, O altitudo! The ſame divine objects to the works of God, and will not be anſwered by the ſame exclamation. My ignorance is made a ſufficient reaſon for ſubmitting implicitely to whatever I find in this book, as agree-

agreeable to the perfections of the Deity; and yet my ignorance is not allowed to be a reaſon for ſubmitting in the ſame manner to whatever I find in the book of nature that God has actually done, as agreeable to theſe perfections. This may be called very juſtly theological effrontery in the divine; and it is at leaſt as abſurd in the theiſt to aſk, whether the conditions of humanity, the various objects which men purſue, and the various ſcenes of their lives from the cradle to the grave, compoſe an end worthy a firſt cauſe perfectly reaſonable? The learned author might have aſked with far leſs impropriety, whether the loweſt employments, to which legiſlators and magiſtrates ſubject ſome of the perſons they govern in political ſocieties, compoſe an end worthy of them? The anſwer would be, that, conſidered by themſelves, they do not; but that, conſidered as parts of a general ſyſtem, wherein the moſt minute are neceſſary to make the whole complete, they do; and that, even conſidered by themſelves, they are worthy at leaſt of the perſons to whom they are aſſigned.

In what I have written to you about human knowledge, I have inſiſted on one obſervation, which I will recall, and apply to the preſent caſe. The preſent caſe will juſtify the obſervation, and both together will diſcover very clearly the principal ſource from which all the perplexity, and all the tedious diſputes concerning the origin of evil, and the ſuppoſed unjuſt diſpenſations of providence,

Digitized by Google

dence, as well as moſt other metaphyſical and indeterminable queſtions, have ariſen. The ſynthetical method of reaſoning by arguments a priori, that is by arguments deduced from principles aſſumed to be evident, is very commodious for many philoſophical and theological purpoſes. But it may lead us imperceptibly into error, and we can never be ſure that it leads us to truth, unleſs theſe principles are ſelf evident, or unleſs their evidence be demonſtrated by the analytical method, that is, by arguments a poſteriori, that is, by tracing it up from the known phaenomena. Now, it happens unfortunately for truth, that philoſophers and divines catch at certain principles through levity, through a too implicit confidence, or through deſign, and argue dogmatically from them in the ſynthetical method, without a due regard to the analytical. Thus, for inſtance, the wiſdom of God does not appear alike in all the phaenomena; but as far, as we can diſcover, it appears in the greateſt and the leaſt; to our aſtoniſhment; and the proofs of it multiply in an exact proportion to our diſcoveries, whilſt no one of theſe can be ſtrained into a repugnancy to it, for if any of them could, the caſe would be altered extremely. This wiſdom, therefore, is eſtabliſhed by the analytical method, and we may reaſon ſafely from our ideas of it in the ſynthetical. But the ſame cannot be ſaid of the moral attributes, which we aſcribe to the Supreme Being according to our ideas of them. The ſuperiority we have over the reſt of the animals, that are our fellow inhabi-

tants

tants of this world, which is imaginary, perhaps, in ſome reſpects, and real, without doubt, on the whole, and ſeveral particular phaenomena, wherein virtue is rewarded and vice puniſhed, give us theſe ideas. Now, whether the phaenomena that give them, even thoſe wherein the final cauſes are the moſt apparent, and the moſt immediately relative to man, are to be deemed effects of the divine goodneſs and juſtice in any other ſenſe, than ſome of the ſame and ſeveral others are to be deemed effects of the divine goodneſs to the ſeveral ſpecies of animals; or whether they are all effects of the divine wiſdom exerting itſelf in every part relatively to the whole, may be diſputed. But it cannot be diſputed, and all ſides agree, that many of the phaenomena are repugnant to theſe ideas of goodneſs and juſtice. They, therefore, who proceed on theſe principles, that goodneſs in God is juſt what we conceive it to be in our dealing with one another and in our abſtract notions of it, and that juſtice is the ſame; that he made the world for the ſake of man; that he made man only to communicate happineſs to him; and that every one, who acts in contradiction to this happineſs, muſt be rigorouſly puniſhed by God himſelf, are ſo far from demonſtrating, that they have not the merit of framing a good hypotheſis; ſince no hypotheſis, which is contradicted evidently by any one of the phaenomena, can be received as ſuch; and ſince it is in vain that they endeavour to rectify one by another, and to maintain the ſecond by the very proofs

Digitized by Google

that deſtroy the firſt. If the firſt fails, the ſecond cannot ſtand; and he who expects to be believed when he aſſerts what the phaenomena can neither depoſe for, nor againſt, becauſe he finds no other way to maintain what he had aſſerted in oppoſition to them, expects a great deal more than reaſon will grant him.

WHAT has been ſaid ſeems to be extremely plain: and they would conclude in this manner on any other occaſion, who are not aſhamed to do the very contrary on this. By ſetting themſelves free from the reſtraints of the analytical method, theſe reaſoners a priori reſemble very much one ſort of madmen. Some of theſe are ſo very mad that they loſe all uſe of their reaſon, and are as little able to deduce conſequences as they are to eſtabliſh principles. Others, again, deduce conſequences, and argue very juſtly, but are ſtill mad; becauſe they reaſon from principles that have no appearance of reality out of their own over-heated and diſordered imaginations. You will find inſtances of this kind without the trouble of going to Bedlam. You will find them in every form of life, even among thoſe who are reputed ſober and wiſe, and who really are ſuch, except on ſome one particular ſubject. But you will find them principally in colleges and ſchools, where different ſects have rendered this ſort of madneſs, which is occaſional elſewhere, both epidemical and traditional. Few have been mad like DON QUIXOTE, whilſt multitudes have been, and are, as mad

Digitized by Google

mad in different walks of ſcience, as the daniſh cabaliſt who inſtructed BORRI. The man had great parts, was learned, was devout. He reaſoned extremely well; but he reaſoned, like the reſt of his ſect, on the ſuppoſition of an elementary people and on other cabaliſtical principles. Atheiſts ſeem to me to deſerve a place among the firſt ſort of madmen, and I apprehend that many divines and theiſts ought to be ranked among the ſecond.

THEY who approach the charm are expoſed to the enchantment. How ſhould they eſcape who are bred up in it? I call it an enchantment; and I think that men who have great ſtrength of genius, and great warmth of imagination, are often the moſt liable to be affected by it. The analytical method is the ſureſt road to truth; but it ſuits neither the purpoſe nor the temper of ſuch philoſophers. Where it may carry them they know not. It will carry them to truth, if it be well purſued: but it may carry them to truth that is inconſiſtent with the doctrines they are engaged by prejudice, or intereſt, to maintain: and accordingly we ſee them fly off from it, like men who are afraid of their guide. It is troubleſome and tedious; for it requires often a difficult and long induction of particulars: and they are in haſte to arrive at ſcience, or what they take for ſcience. It ſtops, in many caſes, ſhort, and diſappoints their curioſity. They ſcorn to ſtop where it ſtops; and therefore they take a bold

Digitized by Google

leap, from certain ideas that ſeem to them clear and diſtinct, to the firſt principles of things; as FONTENELLE ſays of DES CARTES, fooliſhly to be ſure, ſince he intended to make his panegyric, and to give him the preference to NEWTON.

ALL this may be applied to the perſons we ſpeak of here; and there is no ſubject, on which the enchantment has had ſo much force, nor has prevailed ſo long, as on this of the origin of evil, the moral attributes of God, and of the diſpenſations of providence. This was a chaos of metaphyſical notions three thouſand years ago, and it is ſo ſtill. Some very able writers have endeavoured to account for the origin of evil conſiſtently with the received notions of the moral attributes of God, and of his deſign in creating man; but I doubt that the two famous queſtions are ſtill unanſwered by them. "If there is a "God infinitely good as well as powerful, how "comes it that there is any ſuch thing as evil in "the world? If he is infinitely juſt, how comes "it that the virtuous have a ſhare, and ſometimes "the greateſt, of this evil?" The hypotheſis of two principles, which had been invented by the moſt antient of the eaſtern philoſophers, and was revived by MANES, and others, contained many abſurdities, and did not ſolve the difficulty; ſince it might be aſked, why did the good God create man at all, if he could not create and govern him independently of the evil god? The hypotheſis of the fall of man, for ſuch it is under a philoſophical

Digitized by Google

phical conſideration, will ſerve the purpoſe as little; ſince it is impoſſible to render that aſſumed indulgence of God to the free-will of man, which defeated the original deſign of God, plunged man into a ſtate of miſery as ſoon as he was created, and obliged the divine goodneſs to have recourſe to the expedient of a redemption by the blood of his own Son: ſince it is impoſſible, I ſay, to render this agreeable to our ideas of goodneſs, or even of wiſdom.

THE firſt of theſe hypotheſes has been exploded long ago. The ſecond muſt be defended as well as it can, ſince it is made the foundation of the chriſtian ſyſtem. But however the introduction of evil may be accounted for by this ſacred tradition, and by much ingenious argumentation to the reaſon of mankind; every divine, and ſeveral theiſts, endeavour to account for the exiſtence and diſtribution of it by another hypotheſis, which is as antient as either of the former, and which muſt have been invented, ſince it was not revealed to the Egyptians, and other people, any more than to the Iſraelites, not only for a political, but for a philoſophical purpoſe, and to ſerve for an anſwer to the two atheiſtical queſtions. It is with this hypotheſis, conſidered independently of revelation, that we have to do here. We are to examine whether it reconciles the phaenomena to the ideas we have of goodneſs and juſtice, by aſſuming that this world is nothing more than the porch or entry into another *.

* Religion of nature, p. 297.

Digitized by Google

L.

AS the men who maintain this hypotheſis neglect the phaenomena when they pretend to determine the moral attributes of God, ſo they overſtrain them with much affectation and unfairneſs when they pretend to demonſtrate a future ſtate. The author of the Religion of nature delineated, that I may mention one particularly, does this in ſuch a manner that his exaggerations become burleſque *. According to him, "the general "ſtate of mankind is ſcarce conſiſtent with the "idea of a reaſonable cauſe, becauſe we are born "with the labor of our mothers; becauſe we are "liable to hunger, thirſt, heat, cold, and indiſ-"poſitions of various kinds; and becauſe one "generation drops off, and another ſprings up; "that is, becauſe as we are born, ſo we die. "Children, we trifle away our time at play; or "we are ſent to ſchool, and ſubmitted to diſci-"pline. Men, we are expoſed to difficulties, "and ſurrounded with cares. There are inhuman "or vicious huſbands, falſe or peeviſh wives, re-"fractory or unhappy children. Many can never "obtain a comfortable livelihood; many of thoſe "that do, break; and even when their affairs go "on proſperouſly, their families increaſe, and "new occaſions of ſolicitude are introduced by "this increaſe. Under ſuch grievances we lie "during the beſt part of life; and when we grow "old we grow infirm. In ſhort, phyſical and

* Ib. p. 206, 207, 209.

"moral

" moral evil, intermixed with a few tranſitory and " uncertain enjoyments, not worth enjoying, " make up the whole ſyſtem of our lives; at the " laſt ſtage of which, if we are not taken away " ſooner by death, fainting, tottering, and bend- " ing to the earth, we fall into the grave of our- " ſelves." Such, and far more miſerable (for I omit among others thoſe who labor under incurable diſtempers, and who ſubſiſt by begging, borrowing, or ſhifts as bad as theſe) is the ſtate of mankind repreſented to be; after which the pathetic writer concludes, And muſt man end here? Is this the period of his being? Is this all? The author I quote is ſo tranſported by the torrent of his eloquence, and by ſuch reflections as theſe, that he raiſes in his own mind what I think he will raiſe in that of no ſober reader, a ſort of indignation againſt the ſtate wherein almighty God has placed us, and againſt the order of his providence. On this he grounds an expectation of life and immortality in a better ſtate, and, on this expectation, an argument that there will be ſuch a ſtate.

In this rapture he retires to ſome ſolitary walk, and there far from noiſe perhaps, but certainly not free from prejudice, he meditates for our inſtruction. " He thinks himſelf ſure that he is " above lifeleſs matter, above the vegetative " tribe, and above the ſenſitive animals that he " ſees. He has not only immediate ſenſations, " but ideas, of an higher order. He can make

Digitized by Google

" excurſions into futurity; he had almoſt ſaid " that he could, by ſtrict thinking, get into ano- " ther world beforehand. Can he be made capa- " ble of ſuch great expectations only to be diſap- " pointed at laſt? Can he have ſuch overtures " of immortality, if, after all, there is no ſuch " thing? He makes great improvements in know- " ledge which he has often no opportunity of " ſhewing here. Muſt they not be preparations " for another world, wherein he may ſhew them? " Can the author of his reaſoning faculties be " himſelf ſo unreaſonable as to give them to no " purpoſe? By the exaltation of his reaſon, and " by the practice of virtue, he approaches to an " higher manner of being, and taſtes already " ſomething ſpiritual, and above this world. " Muſt his private acts of religion be all loſt? " Can God have ſo little regard for him who has " ſo much for God?"

In this ſpecimen, which is very faithfully extracted, we have an example of the ſecond ſort of madneſs mentioned above. The man who writ all this nonſenſe was a man of parts, of learning, a philoſopher, and a geometrician. But he made one miſtake in the delirium of metaphyſics. Inſtead of reaſoning about a creature of God's, he reaſoned about one of his own, creation. When theſe learned lunatics conceive men to be nearly what they are, they pull down the divinity nearly to the ſame level, and frame their notions of God's proceedings with them on thoſe of their pro-

Digitized by Google

proceedings with one another. When they think more worthily of the Supreme Being, and raiſe their ideas of an all-perfect nature as high as they are able, they raiſe their ideas of the human nature in a certain proportion to theſe; ſo that God and man are, in all their reaſonings, within degrees of compariſon. Thus Mr. WOLLASTON has done in his truths relating to the deity, and in thoſe relating to a private man. He raiſes our conceptions in the firſt as high, as they can be raiſed, and then loſes himſelf, and leaves his reader to be loſt, in the incomprehenſibility of the divine nature, as they muſt needs be. He does not, indeed, flatter the human in the ſecond as groſly, as ſome writers who endeavour to impoſe on us againſt the intuitive knowledge which every one may have of himſelf; but he inſiſts ſo much on the ſpirituality and immortality of the ſoul, and on the unſuitableneſs of the condition to the importance of mankind, that he gives ground ſufficient to ſtand upon to thoſe fulſome panegyriſts of humanity, who conſider man as the image of God, the final cauſe of the creation, and the principal object among created beings, even above angels, of the divine care and ſolicitude.

BUT, after all their endeavours to make of man a being ſuperior to the whole animal kind, rather than a ſuperior ſpecies of the ſame kind, man will appear what he really is to every unprejudiced mind. In vain will they endeavour to perſuade any

Digitized by Google

any ſuch that the natural ſtate of mankind is unnatural, if I may ſay ſo: that is, a ſtate neither agreeable to the nature of God himſelf, nor to that nature wherewith he has dignified man. In vain will they endeavour to perſuade any ſuch that the conditions of humanity are imperfections in the ſyſtem; and that, in the works of God, as in thoſe of men, whatever falls ſhort of the idea of the workman, or is not proportionate to the value of the materials he prepares in one eſſay, may be rectified in another inſtance. It is not only true, but obvious, that man is connected by his nature, and, therefore, by the deſign of the Author of all nature, with the whole tribe of animals; and ſo cloſely with ſome of them that the diſtance between his intellectual faculties and theirs, which conſtitutes as really, tho' not ſo ſenſibly as figure, the difference of ſpecies, appears, in many inſtances, ſmall; and would probably appear ſtill leſs, if we had the means of knowing their motives, as we have of obſerving their actions. The connection of all animal, and, by conſequence, of human with vegetable life, is more remote. But there is ſuch a connection; and it will be manifeſt to him who conſiders how vegetables are produced, how they grow up, how they ripen, floriſh for a time, wither and die; how many wants they have, ſuch as nouriſhment, culture and ſhelter, for inſtance, as well as to how many diſtempers and injuries they are expoſed, in all which circumſtances their connections with the animal kind is too apparent to be denied. Though man is an animated material being

being capable of beginning motion, and of many other modifications of thought, both ſingle, and in ſeries; yet, however theſe mental powers were communicated to him, and in degrees ſtill more imperfect to other animals, his ſyſtem and theirs are founded alike in mere matter: and when we look at them or at one another, the firſt ideas we receive are thoſe of extenſion and figure, the parts of which like thoſe of any other clod of earth, are liable to ſeparation, and to a diſſolution of the form. Nay, there is a further analogy between animated and inanimated bodies. The former have, by inſtinct, a ſort of moral gravitation to one another, by which they adhere together in ſociety. I will not apply inſtinct to the latter; but this I may ſay, that a force as unknown as inſtinct produces a gravitation of the ſeveral parts of matter to each other, and keeps them together in a kind of phyſical ſociety.

The whole world, nay the whole univerſe, is filled with beings which are all connected in one immenſe deſign. The ſenſitive inhabitants of our globe, like the dramatis perſonae, have different characters, and are applied to different purpoſes of action in every ſcene. The ſeveral parts of the material world, like the machines of a theatre, were contrived not for the actors, but for the action: and the whole order and ſyſtem of the drama would be diſordered and ſpoiled, if any alteration was made in either. The nature of every creature, his manner of being, is adapted to his ſtate here,

Digitized by Google

here, to the place he is to inhabit, and, as we may ſay, to the part he is to act. If man was a creature inferior or ſuperior to what he is, he would be a very prepoſterous creature in this ſyſtem. GULLIVER's horſes made a very abſurd figure in the place of men, and men would make one as abſurd in the place of horſes. I do not think that philoſophers have ſhewn in every inſtance why every thing is what it is, and as it is, or that nothing could be in any one caſe otherwiſe than it is, without producing a greater inconvenience to the whole than the particular inconvenience that would be removed. But I am ſure this has been proved in ſo many inſtances, that it is trifling, as well as profane, to deny it in any. We complain often of our ſenſes, and ſometimes of our reaſoning faculties. Both are defective, weak, fallible: and yet, if the former were more extenſive, more acute, and more nice, they would not anſwer the purpoſes of human life, they would be abſolutely inconſiſtent with them. Juſt ſo, if our reaſoning faculties were more perfect than they are, the order of intellectual beings would be broken unneceſſarily, and man would be raiſed above his proper form, without any real advantage to himſelf, ſince the reaſon he has is ſufficient for him in the ſtate allotted to him; and ſince higher faculties, and greater degrees of knowledge would on one hand increaſe his preſumption, and yet on the other would rather excite, than ſate, his curioſity, by ſhewing him more clearly the extent of his ignorance.

Digitized by Google

Wollaston pretends to reduce every one, who does not adopt the hypotheſis of rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate, to this dilemma: "No "rational creature is unavoidably miſerable, or "God is an unreaſonable and cruel being." But, in the firſt place, who told this writer, or how does he know, that there are any rational creatures unavoidably miſerable? The whole ſtory of mankind tells him ſo, and his own ſenſes ſhew him that it is ſo; and on theſe ſuppoſed authorities he makes ſuch a ſtate of miſery to be that of almoſt all mankind. I might have ſaid of all mankind abſolutely: for though he allows that ſome are more, and ſome are leſs miſerable than others; yet in the enumeration he makes of unavoidable human miſeries he includes many that are unavoidable indeed, but that do not conſtitute miſery, either when they come ſeparately, or when ſeveral of them come together. They are inconveniencies at moſt, to which every man is liable. Every man is liable to catch cold, and, like other animals, to be afflicted with various bodily diſtempers. Every man, and he moſt, who is deemed commonly to be the furtheſt removed from miſery, is expoſed to cares, to troubles, to diſappointments, &c. Our author is fond on this occaſion of the word miſery, it carries a ſtronger idea along with it, and ſerves the purpoſe of exaggeration better. But what is miſery? Let us, who have no other purpoſe to ſerve than that of truth, determine our ideas with greater preciſion. As I take hap-

Digitized by Google

happineſs to be a continued permanent ſeries of agreeable ſenſations or of pleaſure, ſo I take miſery to be a continued permanent ſeries of the contrary: and ſuch miſery has never been brought, I believe, on any man neceſſarily, and unavoidably, as a conſequence of the general ſtate wherein God has placed mankind.

PARTICULAR occaſional evils, phyſical and moral, are conſequences of this ſtate, no doubt, and ſuch as we are able to ſhew that they could not be prevented in the beſt of all material ſyſtems. The courſe of things rolls on through a vaſt variety of contingent events, for ſuch they are to our apprehenſions, according to the firſt impreſſion of motion given to it, and under the direction of an univerſal providence. This perpetual flux, and the viciſſitudes it creates, in what we call the fortune of men, bring along with them both good and evil. Human life is checquered variouſly with both; and as the good has often ſome alloy, ſo the evil is ſoftened by many circumſtances, even by habit, and above all, by hope, that cordial drop which ſweetens every bitter portion, even the laſt.

THE ſaying of the Epicureans is true of all ſorts of evil. If it is violent, it ſpends itſelf, or it puts an end ſoon to him who ſuffers it. If it is moderate, it is tolerable, it may be compenſated, or the ſenſe of it may wear out. Thus a dancing, drunken, ſmoaking revel makes ample amends to the

Digitized by Google

the ſavage for all the wants he has ſuffered, and for all the pains and perils to which he has been expoſed. Thus the galley ſlave ſings whilſt he is chained to an oar: and thus might they ſing who worked in the golden mines of the Upper Egypt, and for whom, as well as their relations and poor children, Mr. WOLLASTON is moved to ſo much compaſſion. I ſhould wonder, when he was in Egypt, that he did not quote a tradition from the Bible as well as from DIODORUS, if I did not conſider that he gave probably more credit to the profane than to the ſacred hiſtory, and lament the fate of the Iſraelites who were obliged to make bricks without ſtraw, and whoſe backs were ſcourged by their taſk maſters. The real evils, that men ſuffer, are not in truth ſo great as they appear in theſe exaggerated repreſentations of them, and very often, perhaps, to the eye of a ſpectator: nay, the greateſt of them are not greater than thoſe which men impoſe voluntarily on themſelves, whilſt they complain loudly of evils far leſs, which the conditions of humanity impoſe on them. I might bring examples from thoſe who row in galleys, or dig in mines, for hire; from thoſe who condemn themſelves to paſs their whole lives in auſterities like the fathers of La Trappe, or in torments like the Faquirs of the eaſt, on motives of ſuperſtition; from thoſe in whom a turn of imagination can take off the fear of death, and make them court it before it's time, like the followers of ODIN, who ſung the praiſe of it in their hymns, witneſs the ode of good king LODBROG, and

and had no better a reaſon for it than the hope of drinking beer in the ſculls of their enemies at the palace of ODIN.

THUS do men frequently embrace, by choice, the very evils they complain of when they happen to them in the uſual courſe of things, and ſometimes even death itſelf, for which they have, by nature, the ſtrongeſt averſion. Thus too they devote their whole lives to real and conſtant miſery, which is no part of the general natural ſtate of mankind. In ſhort, their greateſt evils are from themſelves, not from God; which might be ſhewn in innumerable inſtances. True it is that they are ſometimes involved in general calamities, which they can neither foreſee nor prevent, ſuch as inundations, earthquakes, peſtilences, and the entire devaſtations of kingdoms or provinces by ſavage and barbarous people, like the Huns of old, or the Spaniards in later ages. But theſe calamities are rare. They may be conſidered as chaſtiſements; for chaſtiſements are reaſonable when there are any to be amended by partaking in them, or by being, at leaſt, ſpectators of them. They may be conſidered as the mere effects, natural tho' contingent, of matter and motion in a material ſyſtem, put into motion under certain general laws. If they are ſeen in the firſt light, they ſhould teach mankind to adore and to fear that providence which governs the world by particular as well as general diſpenſations. If they are ſeen in the ſecond, they ſhould ſuggeſt

ſome

Digitized by Google

ſome other reflections, which are not without their utility neither.

NECESSARY agents employ all their powers, conformably to the laws of nature, in promoting the ſame end, that is, in carrying on the phyſical ſyſtem. So rational agents ſhould employ all their faculties in preſerving the order of the moral ſyſtem; which reaſon diſcovers to be their common duty, and reaſon and experience to be their common intereſt. There are great deviations in both, with a double difference relatively to the ſtate of mankind. The former are wholly independent, the latter in great meaſure dependent, on man, notwithſtanding the ſtrength of his paſſions, and the weakneſs of his reaſon. The former are not only rare, and the latter frequent; but the conſequences of the latter become much more fatal to the happineſs of mankind in general, than thoſe of the former. From hence it reſults very evidently that the wiſdom of God, which you may call his goodneſs, has given man, by what is in his power, very ample means to make himſelf amends for that which is out of his power. Atheiſts and divines find fault with the whole. They cannot, or they will not, conceive that the ſeeming imperfection of the parts is neceſſary to the real perfection of the whole. The entire ſcheme of the works of God muſt be altered to pleaſe them. Nothing, even inconvenient to theſe delicate perſons, muſt be ſuffered in it. They muſt be phyſically invulnerable, and morally impeccable, or

the divine providence muſt interpoſe continually to ſhield every particular man from evils of one ſort, and to check him, like the demon of SOCRATES, when he is about to commit thoſe of another. This is all they modeſtly require: and of the want of this they complain perpetually; as they pretend, the divine at leaſt does ſo, that they have a right to do, becauſe God appeals to man for the equity of his proceedings.

LET us be convinced, however, in oppoſition to atheiſts and divines, that the general ſtate of mankind in the preſent ſcheme of providence is a ſtate not only tolerable, but happy. Without having WOLLASTON's balance, wherein he weighs happineſs and miſery even to grains and ſcruples, we may pronounce that there is much more good than evil in it; and prove what we pronounce even by his authority, and that of all thoſe who deny it like him, if any ſuch authority can be wanting. It is plain that every man has more good than evil in actual enjoyment, or in proſpect, ſince every man prefers exiſting as he is to non-exiſtence, and ſince none of them, not thoſe who ſuffer the worſt accidents in life, are willing to abandon it, and to go out of the ſtate theſe declaimers repreſent to be ſo miſerable. The propoſition may be advanced thus generally, becauſe there are very few examples to the contrary, and thoſe are of men run mad by diſtemper, or made ſo by ſome prevailing enthuſiaſm. Neither will it avail to ſay that the deſire of life and the fear of death are, one

Digitized by Google

one the greateſt imperfection, and the other the greateſt evils, of our human ſtate; ſince, whatever they are, and from whence ſoever they ariſe, they would leſſen in all caſes, and ceaſe in many, if the condition of mankind were truly ſuch as it is repreſented. What our author's circumſtances were of any kind I am ignorant. But whatever they were, I am perſuaded, you will be of my opinion, that any charitable perſon who had offered to cut his throat, in order only to deliver him from the miſeries he complained of in ſuch lamentable terms, would have been very ill received. But I haſten to wind up and to conclude the hints, for they are no more, which occur to me, and which I think proper to give you concerning the general and uſual ſtate of mankind.

LI.

I SAY then, that if men come helpleſs into the world, like other animals; if they require even longer, than other animals, to be nurſed and educated by the tender inſtinct of their parents, and if they are able much later to provide for themſelves; it is becauſe they have more to learn and more to do; it is becauſe they are prepared for a more improved ſtate and for greater happineſs. Senſe and inſtinct direct all animals to their ſeveral ends. Some of them profit more by experience, acquire more knowledge, and think and reaſon better; than others both in different ſpecies and in the ſame. Man is at the head of theſe: he profits ſtill more by experience, he acquires ſtill

Digitized by Google

more knowledge, he thinks and reaſons better, than all other animals: for he who is born too ſtupid to do ſo, is not a human creature; he ſinks into an inferior ſpecies, tho' he be made after the image of man. Man is able by his intellectual ſuperiority to foreſee, and to provide more effectually againſt, the evils that threaten him, as well as to procure to himſelf the neceſſaries, the comforts, and the pleaſures of life. All his natural wants are eaſily ſupplied, and God has proportioned them to the abilities of thoſe who remain in the loweſt form of rational creatures. The Tartar under his tent, and the ſavage in his hut enjoys them. Such is the general ſtate of mankind. Of what then do we complain? His happineſs exceeds that of his fellow creatures, at leaſt as much as the dignity of his nature exceeds the dignity of theirs: and is not this enough?

We ought to think that it is enough: and yet God has done more for us. He has made us happy, and he has put it into our power to make ourſelves happier by a due uſe of our reaſon, which leads us to the practice of moral virtue and of all the duties of ſociety. We are deſigned to be ſocial, not ſolitary, creatures. Mutual wants unite us: and natural benevolence and political order, on which our happineſs depends, are founded in them. This is the law of our nature; and tho' every man is not able for different reaſons to diſcern it, or diſcerning it to apply it, yet ſo many are able to do this, that they ſerve as guides to the reſt.

Digitized by Google

reſt. The reſt ſubmit, for the advantages they find in this ſubmiſſion. They learn by experience that ſervitude to law is real liberty; and that the regulation of pleaſure is real happineſs. Pleaſures are the objects of ſelf love; happineſs that of reaſon. Reaſon is ſo far from depriving us of the firſt, that happineſs conſiſts in a ſeries of them: and as this can be neither attained nor enjoyed ſecurely out of ſociety, a due uſe of our reaſon makes ſocial and ſelf love coincide, or even become in effect the ſame. The condition wherein we are born and bred, the very condition ſo much complained of, prepares us for this coincidence, the foundation of all human happineſs; and our whole nature, appetite, paſſion, and reaſon concur to promote it. As our parents loved themſelves in us, ſo we love ourſelves in our children, and in thoſe to whom we are moſt nearly related by blood. Thus far inſtinct improves ſelf love. Reaſon improves it further. We love ourſelves in our neighbours, and in our friends too, with TULLY's leave; for if friendſhip is formed by a kind of ſympathy, it is cultivated by good offices. Reaſon proceeds. We love ourſelves in loving the political body whoſe members we are; and we love ourſelves when we extend our benevolence to all mankind.

THESE are the genuine effects of reaſon, theſe are the purpoſes for which it was given us: and nothing more trifling, nor more abſurd, can be found in the writings of thoſe who have preſumed

Digitized by Google

to cenſure the providence of God, than what TULLY puts into the mouth of COTTA, in the third book Of the nature of the gods, on this occaſion. "I know not," is the pontiff made to ſay, "whether it had not been better for man-"kind to have had no reaſoning faculties at all, "ſince they are hurtful to ſo many, and profit-"able to ſo few, than to have had them ſo boun-"tifully and ſo profuſely beſtowed *." Fooliſh and profane! Fire ſerves for ſeveral neceſſary uſes, among the reſt to warm us; and ſenſitive experience teaches us to diſtinguiſh between warming and burning, in the manner and degree wherein we employ it: ſhall we renounce the uſe of it, and complain that there is ſuch an element, becauſe it burns us when we employ it ill, or when we neglect, in employing it well, the precautions and attentions that are neceſſary? Juſt ſo (for we may transfer this material image to an intellectual ſubject much more properly, than ſuch images are uſually transferred to ſuch ſubjects by metaphyſicians) juſt ſo, I ſay, human reaſon is given for ſeveral neceſſary uſes, and principally to lead us to all the happineſs we are made capable of attaining by a proper application of it, which rational experience is ſufficient to teach us. This compariſon is more juſt, than that which COTTA

* Haud ſcio an melius fuerit humano generi motum iſtum celerem cogitationis, acumen, ſolertiam, quam rationem vocamus, quoniam peſtifera ſit multis, admodum paucis ſalutaris, non dari omnino, quam tam munifice, et cum large dari.

makes

Digitized by Google

makes, and BAYLE has copied, of the Supreme Being to a phyſician, who preſcribes wine to a patient that he knows will drink it too ſtrong, and periſh by the uſe of it. Neither the ſtrength of our reaſon, nor the too frequent uſe of it, but the contrary, are to be apprehended: and if the ſick man's wine muſt be mingled with water to do him good, reaſon, the medicina animi, muſt be employed pure and unmixed. The other ſimilies, which theſe academicians employ, are as impertinent as this, and might be ſhewn very eaſily to be ſo, if it were worth our while. But no man, who is not already devoid of reaſon, will be induced by them to renounce this noble gift, wherein the dignity of our nature conſiſts, becauſe it becomes hurtful when we apply it ill; or through negligence, or through affectation, or through deſign, even when we apply it well. It was applied rather impertinently, than hurtfully, to maintain ſtoical apathy; for it was not given to deſtroy, but to direct and govern, the paſſions; to make them as beneficial as they are neceſſary in the human ſyſtem; to make a PISO of a CATILINE,* and a BRUTUS, I mean the firſt, of a CAESAR. But it was applied very hurtfully, indeed, and it is ſo ſtill by thoſe who employ all the reaſon they have to corrupt the morals of men, to bribe, to ſeduce, to argue, to deceive, or to force them out of their properties, or their liberties, and to make a whole commmunity become the vaſſals of a faction of men, or of one man. This in politics,

* Frugi.

Digitized by Google

In religion it was applied very hurtfully, and it is ſo ſtill by atheiſts and divines, whilſt the former endeavour by ſophiſm and declamation to cenſure the works of God, and the order of his providence, to deſtroy the belief of his exiſtence, and to baniſh all ſenſe of religion; and whilſt the latter, who join very heartily in the ſame cenſure, would be thought to juſtify the divine attributes againſt the common accuſation, and to promote the intereſts of religion by this juſtification.

A MOST unneceſſary juſtification ſurely! if they did not make it neceſſary; ſince God leads us by the natural ſtate, in which we ſtand at firſt, into the road of happineſs, and leaves us to the conduct of a ſufficient guide, that is, of our reaſon, afterwards. It would be falſe to ſay, as SENECA ſays, ſomewhere in one of the rants of the portic, that we owe our virtue to ourſelves, not to God. It would be equally falſe to ſay, that we owe our happineſs to ourſelves, not to God. But this may be ſaid with truth, that God, when he gave us reaſon, left us to our free-will to make a proper, or improper, uſe of it: ſo that we are obliged to our Creator for a certain rule and ſufficient means of arriving at happineſs, and have none to blame but ourſelves, when we fail of it. It is not reaſon, but perverſe will, that makes us fall ſhort of attainable happineſs. The rule is ſo certain, and the means ſo ſufficient, that they who deviate from them are ſelf-condemned at the time they do ſo; for he, who breaks the laws of nature, or of his country,

Digitized by Google

country, will concur to preſerve them inviolate from others. As a member of ſociety, he acknowledges the general rule. As an individual, he endeavours to be a particular exception to it. He is determined in both caſes by ſelf-love. That active principle, inflaming and inflamed by his paſſions, preſſes on to the apparent good which is the object of them: and if reaſon, a leſs active principle, which, inſtead of impelling, requires to be impelled, and to whom it belongs to be conſulted in the choice, as well as in the purſuit, of an object, is called in, it is called in too late, and is made the drudge of the will predetermined by paſſion. Thus it happens that ſelf love and ſocial are divided, and ſet in oppoſition to one another in the conduct of particular men, whilſt, in the making laws, and in the regulation of government, they continue to be the ſame. As long as they do ſo, the happineſs of mankind is abundantly provided for and ſecured, in their ſeveral ſocieties; and, notwithſtanding the phyſical evils to which the members of theſe ſocieties may ſtand ſometimes expoſed, every reaſonable man, every man who is not a diſciple of ſuch a whining philoſopher as WOLLASTON, nor ſuch a preſumptuous divine as CLARKE, will confeſs that ſuch a ſtate is as happy, not only as human eye ever ſaw, or human ear ever heard, but as the heart of man can conceive to belong to humanity; and much more happy than creatures, but one degree above thoſe whom they deſpiſe, could expect to be.

Digitized by Google

It is true, indeed, that governments ſhift and change not only their adminiſtrations, but their forms. Good princes and magiſtrates carry on the work of God, and by making men better make them happier. When theſe are corrupt, the infection ſpreads. They corrupt the people, the people them: ſocial love is extinguiſhed, and paſſion divides thoſe whom reaſon united. When the abuſe is confined within certain bounds, the condition of many men may be happy, and that of all may be ſtill tolerable: and when the abuſe exceeds ſuch degrees, and when confuſion or oppreſſion becomes intolerable, we are to conſider that they who ſuffer deſerve to ſuffer. Good government cannot grow exceſſively bad, nor liberty be turned into ſlavery, unleſs the body of a people co-operate to their own ruin. The laws, by which ſocieties are governed, regard particulars: and individuals are rewarded, or puniſhed, by men. But the laws, by which the moral as well as the phyſical world is governed, regard generals: and communities are rewarded or puniſhed by God according to the nature of things in the ordinary courſe of his providence, and even without any extraordinary interpoſition. Look round the world antient and modern, you will obſerve the general ſtate of mankind to increaſe in happineſs, or decline to miſery, as virtue or vice prevails in their ſeveral ſocieties. Thus the author of nature has been pleaſed to conſtitute the human ſyſtem; and he muſt be mad who thinks that any of the atheiſtical, theological, or philoſophical makers,

Digitized by Google

makers, and menders of worlds, could have conſtituted it better. The ſaying of ALPHONSUS, king of Caſtile, who found ſo many faults in the conſtruction of the material world that he pronounced himſelf able to have given the ſupreme architect a better plan, has been heard with horror by every theiſt: ſhall we hear without horror the men ſpoken of here, when they find fault with the moral, as well as phyſical plan; when they found accuſations againſt the goodneſs, juſtice, and wiſdom of God, merely on their pride; when they aſſume, on no other foundation, that man is, or ought to have been, the final cauſe of the creation, and rail as heartily at providence as PLUTARCH repreſents EPICURUS to have done; in ſhort, when they go ſo far as to impute to God the introduction or permiſſion of thoſe very evils which neither God is anſwerable for, if I may uſe ſuch an expreſſion, nor nature, nor reaſon, but our own perverſe wills, and the wrong elections we make?

I CANNOT hear any part of this without horror; and therefore if I had walked with WOLLASTON * in ſome retired field, my meditations would have been very different from his, more juſt and more reverential towards the Supreme Being. I ſhould have been very ſure that neither lifeleſs matter, nor the vegetative tribe have any reflex thoughts, nor any thoughts at all. I ſhould have been convinced that the faculty of thinking is given to ſenſitive animals, as we call them, in a lower degree than to man.

* Ibid. p. 209.

But

Digitized by Google

But I ſhould not have been convinced that they have the power of exerciſing it in reſpect of preſent objects only. The contrary would appear to me, on ſome occaſions, as manifeſt in them, or in ſome of them, as it appears on others, and on more, in the man who is born dumb. I ſhould feel the ſuperiority of my ſpecies, but I ſhould acknowledge the community of our kind. I ſhould rouſe in my mind a grateful ſenſe of theſe advantages above all others; that I am a creature capable of knowing, of adoring, and worſhipping my creator, capable of diſcovering his will in the law of my nature, and capable of promoting my happineſs by obeying it. I ſhould acknowledge thankfully that I am able, by the ſuperiority of my intellectual faculties, much better than my fellow creatures, to avoid ſome evils and to ſoften others, which are common to us and to them. I ſhould confeſs that as I proved myſelf more rational than they by employing my reaſon to this purpoſe, ſo I ſhould prove myſelf leſs rational by repining at my ſtate here, and by complaining that there are any unavoidable evils. I ſhould confeſs that neither perfect virtue, nor perfect happineſs are to be found among the ſons of men: and that we ought to judge of the continuance of one, as we may judge of our perſeverance in the other, according to a maxim in the ethics of CONFUCIUS; not by this, that we never fall from either, ſince in that ſenſe there would be no one good nor no one happy man in the world; but by this, that when we do fall we riſe again, and

Digitized by Google

and purſue the journey of life in the ſame road. Let us purſue it contentedly, and learn that as the ſofteſt pillow, on which we can lay our heads, has been ſaid by MONTAGNE to be ignorance, we may ſay more properly that it is reſignation. He alone is happy, and he is truly ſo, who can ſay, Welcome life whatever it brings! welcome death whatever it is! "Aut transfert, aut finit." If the former, we change our ſtate; but we are ſtill the creatures of the ſame God. He made us to be happy here. He may make us happier in another ſyſtem of being. At leaſt, this we are ſure of, we ſhall be dealed with according to the perfections of his nature, not according to the imperfections of our own. Reſignation in this inſtance cannot be hard to one who thinks worthily of God; nor in the other, except to one who thinks too highly of man. That you, or I, or even WOLLASTON himſelf, ſhould return to the earth from whence we came, to the dirt under our feet, or be mingled with the aſhes of thoſe herds and plants from which we drew nutrition whilſt we lived, does not ſeem any indignity offered to our nature, ſince it is common to all the animal kind: and he, who complains of it as ſuch, does not ſeem to have been ſet, by his reaſoning faculties, ſo far above them in life, as to deſerve not to be levelled with them at death. We were like them before our birth, that is nothing. So we ſhall be, on this hypotheſis, like them too after our death, that is nothing. What hardſhip is done us? None, unleſs it be an hardſhip, that we are not immortal, becauſe

becauſe we wiſh to be ſo, and flatter ourſelves with that expectation. As well might that emperor of China have complained of his diſappointment, when he imagined he had bought immortality of a certain impoſtor, who pretended to give it, and then died. If this hypotheſis were true, which I am far from aſſuming, I ſhould have no reaſon to complain, tho', having taſted exiſtence, I might abhor non-entity. Since then the firſt cannot be demonſtrated by reaſon, nor the ſecond be reconciled to my inward ſentiment, let me take refuge in reſignation at the laſt, as in every other, act of my life. Let others be ſolicitous about their future ſtate, and frighten or flatter themſelves as prejudice, imagination, bad health, or good health, nay a lowering day, or a clear ſunſhine, ſhall inſpire them to do: let the tranquility of my mind reſt on this immoveable rock, that my future, as well as my preſent, ſtate are ordered by an Almighty and Alwiſe Creator; and that they are equally fooliſh, and preſumptuous, who make imaginary excurſions into futurity, and who complain of the preſent.

These reflections on the general and uſual ſtate of mankind may be carried much further, and more may be added. But theſe are ſufficient, and I proceed to plead the cauſe of God, on another head, againſt the ſame confederates.

The End of the Fourth Volume.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google